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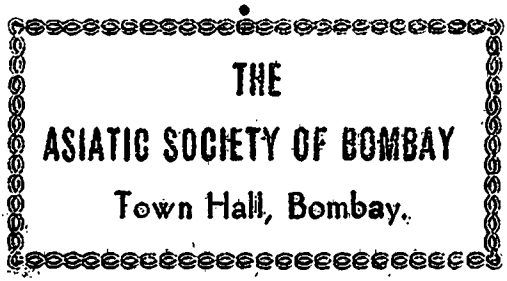

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PREFACE.

AT various times and in various shapes during the last quarter of a century quantities of schemes for amending the condition of the operative classes of Great Britain, bearing more or less prominently the features known as those of Socialism or Communism, have come to light. They have been recommended and argued for with more or less of vehemence and skill, and have been carried out on occasion with more or less of zeal and energy. Against all these I have felt myself called from time to time to plead and to protest, in the interest of the artisan classes, though not, of course, from their point of view.

These various protests and elucidations are here reproduced. They are reproduced, because they have long since been out of print, and may therefore fairly be presumed to have excited some attention, and to contain some arguments of weight;—and they are reproduced in almost their original shape, partly because I have not now strength or leisure to recast them, and partly because, by appearing nearly as they were written, and with the date of each, they present something like a view of the phases through which the

artisan mind has passed in the course of the generation whose close we are approaching.

I wish I could say that the task of preparing them for re-issue has been a gratifying or an encouraging one. It has been far otherwise. During that lapse of time, the manufactures of England have enormously increased; the aggregate wealth, as well as the numbers, of the productive classes has augmented in a vast and rapid ratio; the weekly wages of artisans and mechanics have risen from 20 to 25 per cent.; their instruction has been unquestionably, perhaps materially, improved; while, as to their very extraordinary increase of power in the political arena, there can be no question whatever. But during the same period it is impossible to say that we can trace any corresponding or parallel growth either in their sobriety, in their treatment of their own wives and children, in the sentiments of friendliness with which they regard their employers, in the sense of justice and consideration which they manifest towards their fellow-labourers, in the sagacity with which they manage their own affairs, or in the wisdom which they contribute to the affairs of the nation. The working men of 1875 (taken in the aggregate and allowing for large exceptions) do not appear to me less easily misguided, less unwise in pursuit of their own interest, less blind followers to mischievous agitators and leaders, and assuredly neither less brutal nor less intemperate, than those I lived among in 1850. They are as vehement and far more successful in insisting upon higher wages, but not one whit wiser,

kinder, or fairer in spending them ; far more clamorous for leisure, but little, if at all, more bent upon spending that leisure worthily. In a word, they seem to me to have had nearly everything they demand within their grasp, and to have cast it away for shadows dangled before them by the blind and passionate ;—they have had a golden opportunity, such as is seldom offered to a nation, of becoming respectable, comfortable, instructed, and secure—a people "with a Balance at its Bankers" —a People of Capitalists instead of Proletaires ;—and to have not so much let it slip foolishly from them, as flung it recklessly away. Even while I write they—at least their chiefs—have avowed in the most open manner their systematic hostility to "piece-work," and have entered on a dogged struggle to repress it. In so doing they have contrived, as has often been the case before, to put themselves as much in the wrong as was possible, and have chosen their moment as unfortunately as their principles. They have shown a curious blindness to the very elements and conditions of England's industrial success, and have declared war upon their own prosperity. But what is far worse :—They have set themselves in opposition, "naked and not ashamed," to the simplest and most obvious dictates of equity and freedom ; forbidding men to do as well as they can or to work as hard as they wish ; declaring that labour shall not be paid according to its real value ; exercising an oppression upon more rational and honourable workmen than themselves which few other people would endure at the hands of even a legal

and established Government; throwing thousands of unskilled labourers out of work who have no concern in their quarrels nor any share in their funds; and without scruple, or apparently any sense of the adjectives by which their proceedings should be characterised, robbing the industrious man of his industry, the able man of his superior skill; and by the one and same step wasting the earnings of the workman laid by as a security against sickness, old age, or failing trade, and the capital of the employer which should be spent in finding occupation for the artisan.* These are all features of evil omen, and I am satisfied that no one who has followed the recent history of Trade Unions or penetrated their true character and purpose, will fancy I have in the least exaggerated their grave significance. There are few sadder spectacles that a nation such as ours can live to watch than the ignorant choosing the wrongheaded for leaders, and investing them with power to guide them recklessly, through sure suffering, to late, perhaps too late, repentance.

PARK LODGE, *January* 1876.

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* The moral aspect of the question has been seldom better expounded than by the "Spectator," whose sympathies always incline it to the side of the artisan, in its number of January 15.

LAING ON PEASANT PROPRIETORSHIP, &c.

MR LAING has now been before the public as an author for many years. His first work, "Travels in Norway," at once procured for him a high reputation, which his subsequent writings confirmed rather than impaired. The "Notes of a Traveller," published seven or eight years ago, attracted general and deserved notice, and was a really valuable contribution to our knowledge of continental countries. The events of 1848 induced Mr Laing to enter on a re-examination of the political and social condition of those countries, with special reference to the subjects treated of in his former volume; and the work now before us is the result. Mr Laing is a shrewd, intelligent, and competent observer, with an inquisitive habit of mind, and considerable logical powers. He has a strong tendency to question and controvert every received opinion—a disposition which is valuable as stimulating inquiry, but dangerous as generating a love of paradox. His intellectual training has evidently been incomplete; he has thought much more than he has read; and this may perhaps account for a dogmatic and dictatorial style, and a contemptuous tone towards far sounder and deeper thinkers than himself, which are at once un-

becoming and offensive. In spite of these faults, however, his work is one of great interest and value; still it is more suggestive than instructive, and should be read, not in a passive and recipient, but in an active and questioning state of mind. His statements and conclusions must be sifted rather than taken for granted; and some of his statistics, and much of his political economy, the reader exercised on such matters will put summarily aside. We feel, however, too much indebted to him for having called public attention to several of the most interesting questions of the day, for the thorough discussion which some of these have undergone at his hands, for much valuable information, and for still more valuable suggestions, to feel disposed for severe criticism; and therefore without further preface we shall at once proceed to consider a few of the very momentous matters which he has opened for investigation.

The series of sudden and nearly simultaneous convulsions which agitated the Continent in 1848—the strange social phenomena which those convulsions brought to light—the apparent ease with which the oldest and strongest governments were overthrown, and the majestic and dignified tranquillity which England maintained amid the general confusion—could not fail to awaken the most anxious interest as to the causes at once of the convulsion and the contrast. In Italy, in France, in Germany, dynasties which a few months before had been thought as stable as the hills, and constitutions which seemed rooted in the habits, if not in

the affections, of the people, fled away before the whirlwind like withered scrolls. Standing armies, nurtured in unquestioning obedience, trained in all the sternness of military discipline, which seemed mighty alike to conquer or control, became in a single hour dissolved, paralysed, or traitorous. Principles which struck at the root of all order and subordination, systems incompatible with the progress or existence of society, were suddenly proclaimed, adopted, and enforced, as if they had for years been the secret creed of the community; while in England, suffering as she was under the prostration consequent on the commercial crash of 1847, with a high price of food, with thousands of unemployed artisans, and with a large portion of her population in a state of permanent and melancholy distress—with Ireland at her side, excitable by nature, turbulent by habit, goaded by wicked agitators, and afflicted with terrific famine—scarcely a disturbance occurred which the common constables could not repress; scarcely a periodical publication appeared, scarcely a popular movement took place, which did not indicate the spread of sound views, and the progress of healthy and contented feeling among the mass of the community. All this pointed to some marked and prolific contrasts between the social and political condition of Britain and of the continental countries, which might explain so singular a diversity, and which it was specially important to discover and proclaim.

It soon became apparent that among many minor differences three might be distinguished as of para-

mount weight and influence. These are—1. The different tenure and division of landed property in England and on the Continent; 2. The bureaucratic system, or "functionarism," as Mr Laing calls it, prevalent all over Europe, but almost unknown here; and 3. The peculiar constitution of the standing armies in the respective countries. We propose on the present occasion to deal only with the first of these.

In Great Britain everything conduces to the aggregation of landed property into large masses and into few hands. Law, custom, circumstance, and the hereditary prejudices which grow out of all these and react upon them, all tend in the same direction. The old military and feudal system necessitated the undivided descent of land; the aristocratic feeling which survived this necessity still continues the custom; and economic writers are beginning to discover much sound policy and right feeling in a proceeding which at first sight seems at variance with both. Many properties are entailed from generation to generation upon the eldest son, so that the existing proprietor is only a hampered life tenant: this is a system which it is impossible to reprobate too strongly. If a man dies intestate, t[illegible] law decides that all his real estates shall descen[illegible] the eldest son; and the law has so modified the [illegible] ings and ideas of men (which are apt, as we know [illegible] run in ruts) that when wills are made, they [illegible] generally pervaded by the same spirit which dicta[illegible] and which maintains the law; and the large porti[illegible] if not the whole, of the landed property of the deceas[illegible]

commonly follows the rules of primogeniture. The consequence of these influences, operating through many centuries, is that with 18,000,000 of people in England and Wales, the number of landed proprietors is supposed not much to exceed 180,000;* or one per cent. of the population, or five per cent. of the heads of families. Now, as England and Wales contain about 37,000,000 of acres, exclusive of water, this would give 200 acres as the average size of properties. Of course the chief part of the land is held in far larger masses.

In France, on the contrary, the land of a deceased proprietor is divided equally (or nearly so †) among all his children. If he dies intestate, the law divides it for him according to this plan: if he make a will, he must make it in conformity with this plan. No choice is left him. This law of compulsory partition has now been in active operation for sixty years; it dates from 1791. It is more cherished by Frenchmen than any other law; it is the only law which they obey unmurmuringly; it embodies and expresses their sole idea of liberty because it breathes equality. Strange that an enactment so restrictive, so hampering, so fatal to a man's power of "doing what he will with his own," of bestowing as he pleases what he has inherited, or what he has acquired—a law which by an Englishman would be resented and shaken off as an intolerable and unjust

* In 1850; but these figures are conjectural.

† A father has one child's portion, to appropriate among the children as he pleases.

tyranny—should be worshipped by a Frenchman as containing all he knows of freedom! Yet so it is. Under the operation of this law, the land of France has become subdivided to a degree which is felt to be so perilous and injurious that the process has at length been checked; no further *morcellement* is taking place, and even a slight reaction is observable. In a population of 36,000,000, about 4,250,000 are proprietors of land; or 12 per cent. of the inhabitants, and about 55 per cent. of the heads of families. The average size of the estates held by each proprietor is under twenty-four acres; while of the 11,500,000 proprietors into which the land was divided in 1842, 5,500,000 were assessed at less than five francs to the *contribution foncière*, or land tax, which is generally fixed at about a sixth part of the annual value; that is to say, half the properties in France were only worth 25s. a year; two of these properties being generally held by one individual. M. Lullin de Châteauvieux, one of the best authorities, divides the proprietors of France into three great classes:—the small proprietors, who are 3,900,000 in number, and own, on an average, nine acres each; the middling class, estimated at 700,000, who own about fifty acres each; and the large proprietors, who may be 200,000 in number, and whose properties reach 200 acres.

Peasant proprietorship in Prussia dates only from the wars of Napoleon, in 1807, and, of course, has not had time to produce its full effect. We have not the means of giving very full statistics on the subject. All

that is known is, that the process of subdivision is still going on, and that every year sees more proprietors and smaller properties. In the whole of Prussia, out of 16,000,000 of people, there were in 1849, only 474 individuals possessing a clear annual income of more than £1,200.

It appears that there are 315,000 estates of less than fifty acres, not reckoning the cases of those peasants who merely possess a cottage and garden of their own. (*Schubert's Statistics of Prussia.*)

In France and Prussia, peasant proprietorship is of comparatively recent date. But there are other countries in which it had existed for centuries: these are Norway, Switzerland, and Flanders. We have no means of stating to what extent the subdivision of land in these countries has been carried. In Norway the properties are generally of a reasonable size: in Flanders the holdings, if not the estates, are occasionally as small as six acres; in Switzerland, according to Sismondi, the *morcellement* has proceeded much further than is desirable. But, generally speaking, in all these countries, the subdivision of estates long ago reached its limits; and where they are not more than sufficient to support an industrious family in comfort, they are permitted, by private arrangement, to descend entire.

The desirableness or undesirableness of this subdivision of the land among a number of small proprietors has been so recently and fully discussed by a host of eminent and able men, such as Mill, M'Culloch, Sismondi, Passy, and Laing, and since then by

Thornton, that it might appear presumptuous, and to many of our readers tedious, were we to attempt to enumerate their arguments *pro* and *con.*, and to hold the balance and pronounce judgment between them. We shall prefer to sum up the principal consequences, favourable and the contrary, which have, by general admission, been found to result from the system, and to indicate a few points on which the subject seems to us not to have been fairly fathomed, and on which some singular fallacies have been broached.

Much good controversy has been wasted on the question, whether really good farming can co-exist with the system of small holdings; the general idea in England being that large farms are essential to high and successful cultivation, the Continental opinion being just the reverse. The facts of the controversy are, that in this country, the highest cultivation is almost uniformly to be found on the largest farms; while a far higher cultivation—probably the highest that anywhere prevails—is to be found under the *metayer* system of Lombardy and Tuscany, in the small holdings of Flanders, and in the small properties of Switzerland; and a far worse cultivation—probably the most imperfect and slovenly in any civilized country—may be met with in the small holdings of Ireland, and the small properties of France and Savoy; the stimulus and the means of good cultivation being found, in the one case, in the capital and science of the large farmer, and, in the other, in the indefatigable diligence and the affectionate watchfulness of the small pro-

prietor; while the bad cultivation of Ireland is traceable to the ignorance, sloth, and insecurity of the cottier, and the bad cultivation of France to a subdivision of the soil clumsy in manner, excessive in degree, and incompatible with the acquisition of a sufficiency of manure.* Good farming is equally attainable under either system, if not carried to an extreme; and the summary of the whole question may, we believe, be contained in this simple formula:—That, assuming the application of a sufficiency of capital, skill, and industry, to do justice to the

* The truth we believe to be, that the success or failure of the system of peasant proprietorship depends much less upon any inherent virtue or vice in the system itself, than upon the character, habitudes, and government of the people among whom it is established. In Norway, Switzerland, Schleswig, and parts of Flanders, the small proprietors are flourishing, contented, and respectable. In France and Savoy they are restless, impoverished, and often miserable; in Ireland, we have no doubt, they would become so too. We have just received the following account of the country of the Waldenses from a gentleman who has resided there for twenty years:—"The problem of territorial distribution has found its natural solution in these valleys; that is, it has reached that point beyond which subdivision cannot descend to any lower depth; in which each person possesses just land enough to exist, and rear a small family in the most wretched poverty, maintaining in the cold season a temperature at which life can be continued by living in the stables along with their cattle, and exposed to the injurious exhalations of such close and uncleansed abodes, consuming a most innutritious diet, exposed to fever, and, from any casualities of the season, to actual famine. The population is, therefore, stationary, sometimes even declining; and any surplus must and *do* emigrate. There is absolutely no agricultural surplus, nothing to exchange for products out of the valleys, and no money."

capacities of the soil, the largest gross produce is attainable by *la petite culture* (as it is called); and the largest produce in proportion to the labour expended is procurable by *la grand culture*. How, then, is the larger produce which results from small farming obtained? Clearly by bestowing upon it a greater amount of labour. But how does it answer to bestow this extra labour in the former case, and not in the latter? Clearly, again, because it is bestowed gratuitously. If it is worth the small farmer's while to bestow this extra labour—*i.e.*, if it yields him any return equal to what he might have gained in employing it in any other way—it must be as well worth the large farmer's while, to hire this extra labour, at a fair price; *i.e.*, to give for it a payment equal to the extra return it yields. If it is really worth to the small proprietor working on his own farm (say) a penny an hour, it must be worth while for the large farmer to give a penny an hour for it. If the labour be applied in the one case, and not in the other, it can only be because the labourer in the one case gives it for less than it is worth; or, in the other case, asks for it more than it is worth. The fact being that, generally speaking, the man would idle away this extra hour, or employ it in fitting recreation, if the sentiment of proprietorship did not tempt him to work when he should be amusing his family or improving his mind, or to work for a less remuneration than he could obtain, if, instead of working on his own farm, he hired his services during that extra hour to

another master. He works for himself for less than he would take to work for any one else. In this case it is obvious that, economically speaking, his labour has been ill bestowed; and that if he were a man bent upon turning every hour to the best account, it would be as profitable to hire himself to the large farmer for his spare moments, at such small remuneration as it would be profitable to the large farmer to pay, as to employ himself on his own land; and probably more profitable to occupy himself in some other employment—whether handicraft, by which he might earn or save a trifle; or mental cultivation, by which he might lay the foundation for future prosperity. If the extra produce on a small farm is obtained by employing on it the labour of the son and daughter (for example) of the proprietor, whose earnings, if otherwise employed, would reach £50 a year, it is clear that he pays £50 a-year for their labour; and if the extra produce resulting from their labour is not worth £50, he and his family are losers by their system of minute farming.

Mr Laing does not perceive this. He conceives it to be impossible that a large farm should be as highly and minutely cultivated as a small one, and does not see wherein this supposed impossibility consists.

"It stands to reason," he says, "that no large farm (one of 500 acres for example) can, by dint of capital and hired labour, be made literally a garden in productiveness, in the cropping, cleaning, weeding, manuring, and cultivation of it; but the 500 acres could be made into a hundred gardens of five acres each, and each dug, raked, manured, weeded, and cropped by the family

it supports, and each lot be as productive as any kitchen or market garden—a productiveness which no large farm can ever approach."

Why can it never approach it, but because the gardener is content to work at lower wages for himself than for his neighbour who farms 500 acres? There can, it is clear, be no other reason.

Mr Laing puts a case (p. 38), and draws a contrast which forcibly illustrates his fallacy, though he seems unable to extract the true conclusion from his argument:

"Himself alone
By his own wisdom not a jot the gainer."

"Take," says he, "an estate in the Lothians of 1600 acres, divided into eight farms of 200 acres each, which is about an average size for arable culture. Suppose it well farmed after the most improved system. The farmer of 200 acres will not employ more than ten labourers, at the outside, all the year round: we have thus eighty people kept on this estate of 1600 acres. Now, take a space of land in Flanders of equal extent; it is here divided into garden-farms of five or six acres: every foot of land is cultivated, dug with the spade or hoe where horse and plough cannot work, and all is crop, or in preparation for crop. It is evident that the produce from the 1600 acres under such garden-culture, must surpass that of the 1600 acres under large farm-cultivation, however good, as much as a kitchen-garden surpasses in productiveness a common field."

Unquestionably it must; we will assume the produce to be double—treble, if Mr Laing chooses. But among how many individuals is this produce divided? Let Mr Laing answer:

"On the 1600 acres in Flanders, instead of eight farmers with their eighty farm-servants, there will be from 300 to 320 families, or from 1400 to 1600 individuals, each family working its own piece of land."

In the one case, therefore, the land has to support —*i.e.*, the produce has to be divided among—eighty-eight persons; in the other case among 1500: consequently, in order to allow the Belgian as large a share of the gross produce as the Scotchman, this produce must be, not double, not treble, but *seventeen* times as great in the former country, as in the latter. If, indeed, the object were to support as many individuals on the land as it could possibly maintain, then, indeed, garden-cultivation—nay, potato-cultivation—would be the way to reach this object; though even then this garden-cultivation would be as attainable by applying an equal amount of labour on large farms as on small. But if, on the contrary, the object be (as we conceive it should be) to make the share of each individual as large as possible, *i.e.*, to increase his comforts, and to raise his standard of living, then the larger the produce in proportion to the labour, or, in other words, the smaller the number employed in raising a given amount of produce, the better. Inequality in the distribution of this produce in no degree affects the present question.

It is, then, abundantly manifest that much of the discussion of the relative productiveness of large or small farms is a mere logomachia; that labour for labour, capital for capital, science for science, the produce will be equal: and the probability is, that science will generally be on the side of the larger holder. In Flanders, in Switzerland, and in Norway, it is certain that the subdivision of land has not been attended

with any injurious effects upon cultivation; in France on the contrary, and in Savoy, where, as we have seen, this subdivision has been carried much further, its operation upon the produce of the land has, by common admission, been most deplorable. It appears that the average produce of wheat per acre, which in England is thirty-two bushels, is throughout France only fourteen bushels, and in the best districts seldom more than twenty. M. Léonce de Lavergne, the best authority on this subject, gives, as the result of a most elaborate inquiry, the conclusion that the produce per acre of all agricultural produce is in England just double that of France. (*See Economie Rurale de L'Angleterre*, and *L'Agriculture et la Population, &c.*) Yet in France two-thirds of the population are employed in agriculture, and in England only one-third. Many travellers, and many native writers, give the most picturesque details as to the excess to which this subdivision is carried, often reaching a point at which not only adequate culture is impossible, but at which roads, pathways, ditches, and fences, occupy a most inordinate portion of the soil: in Ireland and Brittany often one-tenth. M'Culloch and Laing are full of these descriptions, but our limits will not allow us to quote them.

2. Even Mr Mill (from whom we always differ with reluctance and with misgiving), though his chapters on peasant proprietorship are filled with the most alluring pictures of the face of the country and the state of society in those lands where the law of equal inherit-

ance prevails, and where families are the owners of the land they cultivate, allows that the advantages of the system are cancelled by too minute *morcellement.* "The benefits," he observes, "of peasant properties, are conditional upon their not being too much subdivided; that is, upon their not being required to maintain too many persons in proportion to the produce that can be raised from them by those persons.* . . . That each peasant should have a patch of land, even in full property, if it is not sufficient to support him in comfort, is a system with all the disadvantages, and scarcely any of the benefits, of small properties; since he must either live in indigence on the produce of his lands, or depend, as habitually as if he had no landed possessions, on the wages of hired labour, which, besides, if all the lands around him are held in a similar manner, he has little prospect of finding." Let us bear this sentence in mind, for it is a very pregnant one.

It is but just to study the effect of peasant pro-

* If any of my readers desire to be satisfied that to give every peasant five or even ten acres of land to farm, even if the rent be low—often even if the land be freehold, would be one of the unkindest boons we could bestow upon him, I can do no better than refer him to Mr F. Clifford's "Agricultural Lock-out," ch. xii. xiii. The result of his own investigation in the Eastern Counties on this matter is amply confirmed by the consentaneous testimony of labourers, farmers, clergymen, and land-surveyors. No man, *who has only his small holding to live upon*, can make a living at all. Those who flourished at all (most of them lived wretchedly) always had some other occupation to depend upon, beyond the cultivation of their own land.

prietorship in those countries where the subdivision of land has not been carried too far; and we fully concur in all that Mill, Laing, and Sismondi say as to the content and respectability, (though not as to the comfort, for theirs is usually a life of frugality amounting to severe privation) of the people living under such a system where this condition is observed. But what does this condition imply? How, under a law of equal inheritance, can the division of estates be stopped as soon as it has reached that limit below which its continuance would be injurious? Clearly only by one of two means; either by each family only rearing two children, a boy and a girl, of whom the girl shall marry another proprietor, and the boy shall succeed to the estate on his father's death (in other words, by reducing the population to a stationary state*); or by one son, either by private agreement or by law (as in Austria†), purchasing the shares of the others, who are to go forth into the world and seek their fortune in other lines. Let us look at the operation of these two alternatives.

Practically, as we shall presently discover, the first of these alternatives presents the only effectual means by which peasant proprietorship, under a law of equal

* That of France is now (1875) decreasing.

† In Austria, according to M'Culloch ("Treatise on Succession," p. 93.), it has been enacted that all landed properties below sixty-six acres shall be indivisible. The governments of Bavaria and Nassau have also found it necessary to impose a legal limit to subdivision, and the Prussian government unsuccessfully proposed the same to the states of its Rhenish provinces.

inheritance can be combined with a due limit to the *morcellement* of land. Mr Mill alone has perceived this conclusion, and has dared to face it. He alone does not shrink from, ignore, or attempt to shirk the issue of his reasoning. On the contrary, he evidently regards it as one of the strongest recommendations of peasant proprietorship, that it operates to induce men to abstain from marriage, or deliberately to restrict the size of their families. He may be right—he is at least consistent and far-seeing; but let no reasoner who wishes to be considered at once clear-headed and honest adopt Mr Mill's premises and evade his conclusion. "In Norway," says Mr Laing, "it is evident that some cause or other, operating on aggregation of landed property, counteracts the dividing effects of partition among children. This can be no other than that the deaths of co-heirs, and the marriages of female heirs among the body of land-holders, will balance the subdivision of the land by the equal succession of children." But this could, of course, only produce the adequate effect by such a limitation of population to two children per family as we have mentioned. Accordingly, we find from Mr Laing that several checks to marriage exist in Norway. One is the ceremony of betrothal, by which marriage is often postponed for three or four years. Then again, "the standard of living for a labourer's family being high, and the minimum of accommodation required, according to the notions and customs of the country, being considerable, the unmarried must wait

as house-servants, until a 'houseman's' place falls vacant, before they can marry." There is, however, the counterbalancing circumstance that, under such a system, illegitimate children will probably be numerous; and Mr Laing states the proportion to be one in five. Sismondi says, "Each improvement in agricultural knowledge admits of another step in the subdivision of property. But there is no danger lest the proprietor should carry this too far. He knows exactly what inheritance he has to leave his children; he knows that the law will divide it equally among them; he sees the limit beyond which this division would make them descend from the rank which he has himself filled; and a just family pride, common to the peasant and to the nobleman, makes him abstain from summoning into life children for whom he cannot properly provide. If more are born at least they do not marry, or they agree among themselves which of the several brothers shall perpetuate the family." Under such a system of restraint on population as is described in the above extract, peasant-estates may, of course, be transmitted, undiminished in extent, from sire to son; but such a system is not contemplated, and would not be faced by the great majority of writers with whom peasant proprietorship is the panacea for our social ills.

"But," it will be said, "there is the second alternative, which involves no such unnatural restraint, for one son to take the estate, and the others to seek their living in other occupations or pro-

fessions." True: let us examine this prescription. Now it is evident that either the eldest son takes the estate in fee simple, and leaves the other sons nothing, —in which case it is simply and barely our system of primogeniture,—or he takes merely the land, and pays his brothers their portion in money; and this is what is generally done where further subdivision is admitted to be unadvisable. But where is the portion-money to come from? It can clearly be raised only by mortgaging the estate. Accordingly, we find that in almost every country where the law of equal inheritance prevails, the land is mortgaged to a frightful and most mischievous extent.* "Though the land itself is not divided and subdivided, the value of the land is, and with effects almost as prejudicial to social progress." In the canton of Schaffhausen, the landed properties are almost all mortgaged; in Zurich we are told on the first authority that the indebtedness of the proprietors "borders on the incredible, so that only the intensest industry, frugality, and temperance, and complete freedom of commerce, enable them to stand their ground." In Prussia the same evil prevails, though to a less degree—the law of equal inheritance having barely existed during a generation and a half; but in France the registered mortgages amounted in 1849 to the enormous sum of 560 millions sterling, 400 millions of which was

* For a curious confirmation of this case in a country where land is cheap and plentiful, see Johnston's "Notes on North America," vol. i. p. 347, *et seq.*

estimated to be upon the *land* alone; and the main portion, indeed nearly the whole, of this enormous debt has been incurred in the course of fifty years, or less than two generations!

"The great evil," says Mr Laing (p. 99.) "of this universal indebtedness is, that the actual cultivator, although he may have the same extent of land as his predecessor, has not the same means to live, and to expend something on the comforts and conveniences of a civilised and advancing condition. He can make but a bare subsistence out of the estate for himself and his family, after paying the annuities or interest of the principal sum with which he bought out the other co-heirs. It is estimated by the authorities quoted above, that, after paying the interest of his debt and the government rates and taxes, the peasant proprietor in France has not, on an average, above three-eighths of the yearly produce of his estate left for his own subsistence. On his death the burden on the estate is increased by an additional set of co-heirs" [in case that is, of his having more than two children]. "This is a retrograde, not an advancing, condition of the agricultural population which is the great mass of the social body. Each generation is worse off than the preceding one, although the land is neither more divided nor worse cultivated."

But it will be worse cultivated, because the power of the proprietor to do justice to it will diminish as his incumbrances augment. In all countries, a mortgaged proprietary is an impoverished body, and therefore incompetent to the due cultivation of the soil. We confess we see no cure for this sore evil, nor any check to its increase; for, be it remembered, peasant-farming, though it may afford a bare subsistence (a very bare one in almost every instance) to a family, is not a lucrative occupation which will procure a man the means of paying off his incumbrances. We can discover no escape for France out of the slough into

which the law of equal inheritance has plunged her, except by a limitation of the number of children to two, or a recurrence to the law of primogeniture; or, thirdly, by some such unhoped-for and millennial development of commerce, or other Eldorado, as should enable the younger sons, who have sought and found their fortune in the world, to purchase back the fee-simple of the estate from their embarrassed elder brother, and pay off all the incumbrance; in which case, of course, the now envied proprietor must in his turn go forth to seek his living, or sink at once to the condition of a day-labourer or a pauper. Can imagination, even, picture any fourth way of salvation for a non-emigrating people?

But, passing over this dreadful and apparently almost incurable social malady of a burdened and mortgaged proprietary, how does the law of equal inheritance, and the consequent partition of the soil among peasant proprietors, even when not carried to excess, operate upon the prospects of those younger sons, who receive their portion of the paternal acres in money, and go forth to seek other occupation?—a branch of the question which, vital and momentous as it is, has been hitherto almost entirely overlooked. These other occupations may be classed under the heads of agricultural labour, various branches of industry and handicrafts, and the civil or military service of the State. Let us see in what way the division of the soil among small proprietors affects the demand for hands in these various departments. For

hired agricultural labour there can, of course, be no demand; each family cultivating its own land by its own members, neither needs, as we have seen, nor can afford to pay for, any extra hands. This prolific source of employment is therefore altogether cut off. An extract or two from the great admirers of the system, will give us the means of estimating its operation on the demand for manufacturing or skilled labour in other branches. "Le paysan qui fait avec ses enfans tout l'ouvrage de son petit héritage, qui ne paie de fermage à personne au dessus de lui, ni de salaire à personne au dessous, qui règle sa production sur sa consommation, qui mange son propre blé, boit son propre vin, se revêt de son chanvre et de ses laines, se soucie peu de connaître les prix du marché, car il a peu à vendre et peu à acheter." (*Sismondi, Econ. Polit.* Essai iii.). "The tendency of peasant proprietors," says Mr Mill, "and of those who hope to become proprietors, is rather towards penuriousness than prodigality. *They deny themselves reasonable indulgences, and live wretchedly, in order to economise.* In Switzerland almost everybody saves who has any means of saving. The case of the Flemish farmers I have already noticed. Among the French, though a pleasure-loving, and reputed to be a self-indulgent, people, the spirit of thrift is diffused through the rural population." In all countries where the system has been long established—in Schleswig, in the Rhenish provinces, in Auvergne, in Norway, and in many parts of the interior of Germany—

domestic manufactures are its invariable concomitant. The family grow, spin, weave, and dye their own wool and their own flax, and generally make their own clothes.

"This is a social state," observes Mr Laing, "which affords no markets, no consumption, no demand for the productions of the ingenuity, skill, and enterprise of other people. All are producers of nearly all they consume, and no class is wealthy enough to set to work a class of producers of objects required for their participation. There can be little interchange of industry, for all are employed equally in producing what they consume. There can be no important home markets for agricultural products, and none for the many products for which great combinations of skill, machinery, and the co-operative labour of body and mind are required, and which are the enjoyments and tastes of civilised life. Where manufactures have been established, as in Switzerland, Belgium, and on the Rhine, it is not upon any consumption at home that they depend but on the foreign market"—[upon countries, that is, where peasant proprietorship, either does not exist, or has not had time to produce the same effects as at home]. "In the social state of Britain it is the reverse. The interchange of industry for industry among the individual producers in our social state is a perpetual animating principle, like the circulation of the blood in the human frame. But this interchange, this living by each other, and dependence on each other, is necessarily inconsiderable in the other social state, where each family is a self-supporting isolated unit, living a kind of Robinson Crusoe life on its own patch of land, producing, in a rough way, all its wants, and going without what it cannot produce. . . . In this social state employment does not keep pace with the increase of population, however small; for as every family is producing, generally speaking, all it consumes, by its own labour in the field or at the fireside, the market for the products of those ordinary trades and handicrafts which employ the great mass of the working population in the old social state is limited, and is necessarily falling off, and not increasing, with the increase of population, because that increase brings a diminution, and not an increase, of the means to consume and give employment. Each family, as its

numbers increase, must necessarily give up more and more in each succeeding generation the use of, and taste for, those objects which it cannot produce at home. The man whose father employed the tailor and shoemaker, and their dependent branches of industry, can now only afford to wear home-made clothes and shoes."

It may be urged that peasant proprietorship need not lead to domestic manufactures. We can only reply that it always has done, and, we believe, inevitably will. The same disposition which induces the peasant owner to bestow his spare and extra hours in *petit soins* on his own farm, rather than exchange them for moderate payment on the large farm of his neighbour, will prompt him to employ them in tanning his own skins and making his own shoes, in preference to paying his neighbour the tanner, or his friend the shoemaker, for doing these things for him. Then his wife and daughters will have many leisure hours, many long winter evenings, when their help in the field is not wanted; and the same economic disposition, the same habit of turning everything to account, the same feeling of proprietorship, which everywhere characterise this class, will be certain to make them employ these hours in carding their own wool, in spinning their own flax, in dyeing the produce of their own loom, in making the garments of their husbands and their children, rather than in idleness or in reading, either of which would involve payment to others for doing that which might so easily be done gratuitously at home. The connection between peasant proprietorship and domestic manufactures may not be one of logical

necessity, but it is assuredly one of general if not certain concomitance.*

So much for the effect of the subdivision of land on the useful arts, which, as a department of industry supporting a large distinct class, it must in time wholly obliterate. Its operation on the fine arts, on those branches of industry which are devoted to the production of the luxuries and elegances of life, will be precisely similar. Its first and most certain tendency is to extinguish or to minimise the spending class; and to reduce the whole community to one uniform level of moderate competence, with no superfluous income to throw away. By its discouragement of manufacturing enterprise it throws a greater number of hands into the department of that ornamental industry which only a rich and spending class could afford to maintain; and then, by obliterating this class, it cuts away the ground from these artisans altogether.

"The small owners of land," says Mr Laing, "more and more burdened with debt in each generation, can afford to buy less, and not more, of the comforts and conveniences of life; and consequently, the home market for the products of the useful arts, and the taste for enjoying them, are diminishing along with the means of the great mass of the population to indulge in them. . . . The class of workmen in the ordinary crafts who, in a sound state of society, should find constant employment and a good living in

* The remarkable exception of Belgium and Switzerland will be quoted in opposition. But the cases of both are exceptional—that of Switzerland peculiarly so. The Swiss are eminently an emigrating race, and a large number of those who emigrate in early youth return in later life bringing with them capital earned elsewhere but applicable to the founding of extensive manufacturing establishments for which such capital is indispensable.

supplying the agricultural class with the objects of the useful arts, are, from the want of means among that class to consume, thrown upon production in the ornamental arts in greater number than the home or foreign markets require, or can absorb. . . . The tastes for the habits, comforts, gratifications, and refinements of a higher state of civilisation are wanting, because the means to form those tastes are wanting; and the classes in the social body who can afford to indulge in them and pay for them are wanting."

The same remarks will apply to those conveniences and luxuries which are the results of foreign commerce. These are only to be purchased by exchanging for them the surplus products of native industry. But, as we have seen, the inevitable and invariable tendency of peasant proprietorship is to diminish, and ultimately to extinguish, this exchangeable surplus, each family producing, every generation, more nearly all it needs, and consuming more nearly all it produces. The complete establishment of the system will therefore be coincident with the gradual extinction of foreign commerce. It seems to us equally impossible to avoid this conclusion, as a logical result, or when we examine the household life of a Swiss or German peasant owner, to shut our eyes to it as an accomplished or approaching fact. These people are clothed in woollen and linen garments, the products of their own farm and looms; they consume no tea; their coffee is nearly all chicory; their sugar is manufactured from beet-root; and their bad beer and sour wine are the growth of their own hop garden and vineyard.

The system of equal inheritance and small ownership, then, cuts away to a great extent from those whom it casts forth to seek a livelihood, the employments of

agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and ornamental handicraft. The civil or military service of the State, the army or the bureau, are the only residual resources. How does the system operate on these? Obviously in the same direction. The servants of the State are paid by taxes levied on the rest of the citizens; and the tendency of peasant proprietorship will be to diminish the surplus which each family can afford to pay to the tax-gatherer, just as it diminishes the surplus each can afford to spend in other ways. A nation of which all the people live on the produce of their estates and up to that produce, or, as Laing expresses it, "produce all they consume, and consume all they produce," will obviously have less to bestow on its Government than one comprising within it a variety of classes, most of whom have a considerable surplus income to spend on luxuries and to meet the burden of taxation. But this is not all. In proportion as a nation consists of small proprietors, or approaches to that social condition, precisely in that proportion will taxation of necessity assume the form which of all others is the most vexatious, burdensome, and intolerable—the direct form. As foreign commerce, the import of foreign articles of luxury or convenience, dies away (as we have seen that it must do under the prevalence of this system), the source of revenue which is least felt, least annoying, and, under different circumstances, most prolific, viz, customs' duties, or the indirect taxes, is dried up. Its place must be supplied either by direct taxation, or by what is almost worse (and under

peasant proprietorships could not long subsist), monopolies and excise. Thus the division of the land into small estates, even under its most favourable circumstances, operates in the first place, to make an equal amount of taxation more burdensome, as being levied from a class which has no surplus income; and, in the second place, to necessitate the levying of this amount in the most burdensome and vexatious manner. The result of these two operations will, of course, be to cause the revenue to be reduced to the lowest possible amount whenever the people are free, and have a voice in the management of their own affairs. These consequences have not yet followed to their full extent, it is true; partly because in the chief countries of the Continent, peasant proprietorship is not yet universal, but is only on the road to become so, and partly because in these countries the people are, for the most part, still subject to despotic or bureaucratic rule. But the difficulty with which direct taxes can be levied upon a free people has been formerly shown in no questionable manner both in America and in France: and that we have not exaggerated the tendency of the subdivision, as contra-distinguished from the aggregation, of landed property to substitute direct for indirect taxation, the following comparison will show. In Prussia the only returns we could obtain mix up the excise, customs and stamps in a manner which makes our statement only a matter of approximation;—and now, too, only a matter of history. (1850.) In the continental countries a considerable proportion of the

revenue is derived from crown lands, or national domains, &c., which will explain why the "total" is more than the sum of the three divisions in this table.

Countries.	Direct Taxes, including Stamps.	Per Centage of Total Revenue.	Excise and Salt Monopoly, &c.	Per Centage of Total Revenue.	Customs.	Per Centage of Total Revenue.	Total Revenue.
	£		£		£		£
France -	27,200,000	50	15,600,000	28	6,520,000	12	54,800,000
Austria -	4,500,000	33	4,000,000	29	1,550,000	11	13,500,000
Prussia -	3,150,000	41	1,800,000	23	1,550,000	20	7,700,000
Gt. Britain	16,000,000	30	14,000,000	26	21,000,000	40	53,000,000

Thus in England forty per cent. of our revenue is raised by indirect taxation, against twenty per cent. in Prussia, and twelve per cent. in France.

One result of this difference in the mode of taxation we can only just intimate here: to enter fully into it would lead us away from our main subject; but it is worthy of deep consideration. In England, and in most cases where the chief part of the revenue is derived from customs' duties levied on imported articles, the working man is, or if he pleases, may be, almost wholly exempt from taxation. He pays no direct taxes whatever. He pays taxes on no article of necessity, except soap. He pays only on articles of luxury: on beer, wine, sugar, spirits, tea, coffee, tobacco. What he pays he pays of his own accord—of his own free choice—of his superfluity. But this never can be the case in an un-commercial country, and is not the case with the German or French peasant or artisan; however poor he be, he pays a

poll-tax, a trade-tax, a class-tax, often a meat-tax; and if he lives in town, he pays the *octroi*, which is a tax on all articles of consumption, and most insufferably burdensome. These are taxes which he cannot escape at pleasure. Yet these are taxes which he might escape, if the social condition of the country admitted of raising a main part of the revenue from articles of importation, as with us. The subdivision of land, then, in its full and final operation, by making taxation more burdensome, will necessarily tend more and more to diminish its amount, and thus to curtail the number of servants whom the government, supported by this taxation, can afford to employ. Thus every mode of livelihood is, by the system of equal inheritance, cut away from under those exiles from the paternal nest, who must exist equally under this system as under the law of primogeniture, if the increase of population is to be suffered to continue.

It may at first sight appear a surprising conclusion that a system of which apparently the first result is to augment the produce of the soil, and in consequence, the numbers whom that soil is capable of maintaining, should yet, in its ultimate issue, be unfavourable to the increase of those numbers, by destroying at its source the fund out of which other branches of industry are to be supported. But our surprise will vanish, and our confidence in the soundness of the conclusion to which our reasoning has led will be confirmed, when we reflect that the subdivision of landed property is, at least in its secondary operation, directly at variance

with that principle of political economy, the most certain and irrefragable which that science has brought to light, which proclaims that division of labour, and the combination of divided labour, are essential to the full efficiency of production. In other words, the extra labour which the peasant proprietor and his family bestow upon their land, and by means of which its extra produce is obtained, is less effective—*i. e.*, produces, ultimately, a smaller return than it would do if otherwise applied; that the aggregate result of the labour of two brothers, for example, is less where both are employed at home upon minute tillage of the patrimonial estate, than it would be were one of them diverted to the production of some other article which might be exchanged against the labour of the other. In this simple consideration, lies as we conceive, the key to the whole mystery—the solution of one of the knottiest, most vital, and most interesting problems propounded to the nineteenth century.

To sum up the whole, the law of equal inheritance implies and involves a stationary, or nearly stationary, state of the population—a state that with each generation must become more and more stationary, as the yield from a given acreage is brought more and more nearly to the maximum of possibility. It is true that if the population *is* thus kept stationary, it may exist in fair comfort and respectability; but, granted that postulate, so it might equally under the law of primogeniture. Nay, as we have just seen, the aggregate population that can be subsisted in the same degree of

comfort will be greater under the latter than under the former law—in the present condition of the world, at least; because the latter is favourable, and the former unfavourable, to that division of employments by which alone their maximum of productiveness can be arrived at.

Of all modern writers on the subdivision of land, Mr Kay* is the most enamoured of its advantages, and the most unconscious of its drawbacks and defects. He sees only its present consequences, and is blind to its ultimate operation. He paints its beauties in glowing colours, and entirely ignores its dangers and deformities. We agree in almost all his representations of fact, but we are inclined to quarrel with his omissions, and to question the justice and completeness of his inferences. He brings an overwhelming mass of testimony to prove the admirable effects which the subdivision of land, and the facility with which small portions of it may be obtained, have produced in Prussia, Saxony, and in many parts of Switzerland, in improving the cultivation of the soil, in raising the condition and style of living among the peasantry, and in promoting habits of forethought, economy, industry, and self-restraint, throughout the population generally. The desire to rise into the position of proprietors stimulates the energy of the labourer, renders him cautious, frugal, and sober, and makes him postpone marriage till he is in a condition to maintain a family. In many of these

* "The Social Condition of the People in England and in Europe" By Joseph Kay, Esq., M.A. Longmans. 1850.

countries, we are told, "the men never marry before the age of twenty-five, and the women seldom till thirty." The average age of marriage in Prussia Mr Kay states at thirty-five. The desire of the proprietor, again, to retain his position, and if possible to amend it, promotes the growth of similar virtues in him; while the anxiety to transmit his hardly-earned estate undiminished to his children induces him to limit the number of them. By the joint operation of these motives the rate of increase of the population is greatly reduced: a position which the author endeavours to strengthen by means of several statistical tables, which, however, contradict one another, and by no means always bear out his conclusions. Mr Kay also draws vivid contrasts between the pauperism of England and the comparative freedom from this sore of several of the continental countries, and between the condition of the peasantry in countries which are differently situated in respect to their social institutions—in Bohemia and Saxony, for example, in the Netherlands, and in Rhenish Prussia, in the Catholic and Protestant cantons of Switzerland.

Now, if we were disposed to lose sight of the main question in a criticism of particular errors, we might show that religion, education, and race, have at least as much to do with these contrasts as the law of equal inheritance. We might remind Mr. Kay that the Saxons and Bohemians are distinct people—distinct in blood, in language, in religion; the former being a

Teutonic, the latter a Sclavonic race; the former being Protestants, the latter Catholics. We might remind him that the small farms of Rhenish Prussia are held by proprietors, and those of Flanders (which are at least equally well cultivated and by at least as prosperous and frugal a people) by rent-paying tenants; and that the Catholic and Reformed cantons of Switzerland, so contrasted in the condition of their peasants and the state of their agriculture, acknowledge the same law of equal inheritance. We might remind him that in no country of central Europe is the land more subdivided, or worse cultivated, than in many parts of France, or the Sardinian States. We might remind him that a vast improvement in the education of Germany has been coincident with the improvement in the condition of her poor, and may have been as effective a cause of it as the acquisibility of land. But to dwell on these things would divert our attention from the heart and marrow of the question, and we therefore pass them by. We will admit that in almost every country, except France, in which small properties prevail, the land is decently cultivated—with extreme care, if with little economy and little science; we will admit that since the promulgation of the new system in Prussia, by which feudalism was broken up, and large estates begun to be superseded by smaller ones, the improvement in agriculture and in the condition of the peasant class has been marked, vast, and undeniable. We will concede, moreover, that much of this amelioration

is the effect, and the natural and necessary effect, of the change from proletairism to proprietorship; and that, *ceteris paribus*, land will always yield more to the hand of the owner than to hired labour. But all this improvement is but the first effect of the transition from a system of slovenly to one of careful culture; from a system which paralysed the energies of the peasant to a system which stimulates them; from a system under which neither owner nor labourer did their duty to the land, under which it enjoyed the full benefits neither of science, nor of industry, to a system under which all unite to develop its capabilities; it is, in fact, the simple result of a transition from bad farming to good, and might easily have been foreseen. But the question for the philosophic statesman regards a future day and a secondary consequence. When the old system shall have been altogether superseded by the new—when the whole of the soil shall be in the hands of peasant proprietors—when industry, science, and the due subdivision of the land shall have brought it all into that state of minute and perfect cultivation which we observe in many parts of Lombardy, of Flanders, and of Switzerland, and which two generations of peasant proprietorship suffices to effect—what then? No new estates can be created, for you have reached the limit at which subdivision is compatible with good agriculture or with comfortable subsistence; no more individuals can be supported from the soil, for its utmost yield has been already extracted from it; manufacturing establishments have been largely super-

seded by articles produced at home*; foreign commerce has languished under the gradual extinction of exchangeable articles, and available surplus for luxurious expenditure; and the civil and military services have been reduced to a minimum, because only a small revenue can even be raised by direct taxation from a nation which consists only of one vast class of yeomen. Whence, then, are the younger children, the increase of the population, to derive their subsistence? It is abundantly obvious that no such increase is possible, no such younger children are permissible.

Thus we see that the law of equal inheritance, the system of peasant proprietorship, which is recommended by some superficial reasoners as enabling population to augment without peril, and by others, deeper and more clear-headed, as limiting this augmentation, does not solve the great problem of social philosophy: viz., how to reconcile an increasing population with an increasing aggregate or average of comfort. It only cuts the Gordian knot which its votaries conceive it to untie. It is monstrous to see grown men thus running about

* Mr. Kay speaks, in more than one place, in high admiration of the plan adopted by many of the Prussian peasants, of hiring themselves to adjacent landowners, till, out of their wages, they have laid by a sufficient sum to become proprietors themselves. He entirely forgets that this resource belongs only to a transition state; and that when all the land is owned in small properties and cultivated by the labour of the family who own it, the landless peasant will find no demand for his services, and, consequently, no access to proprietorship. As long as the process is unfinished, all will go well; it is when it reaches or approaches its completion that the real pressure will be felt.

to catch their bird by putting salt upon its tail. The plan is recommended to us by its ablest advocates because it leads to the postponement of marriage, and checks the multiplication of mankind. Now, we do not enter here into the question whether this enforced restraint, and the stationary state which would result from it, be objects to be feared or to be desired. We will not ask ourselves whether this self-denial, when universally practised and carried to the degree necessary to obtain its end, be not very much *propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.* We will, for the present, put aside the reflection which cannot fail to arise in all our minds, whether the discovery of some system which shall render compatible with prudence and with social duty the early formation of those domestic ties which form the charm and the reward of life, would not be a worthier aim for the philosophic statesman than the establishment of a social state which postpones these enjoyments till existence has begun to fade and wane, till feeling has grown dull, and habit has hardened into unsocial temper and unpliant will. We will pass over all this, and will merely observe that, if either this severe and general restraint upon multiplication, or emigration on a prodigious scale, is to be enforced under the system of equal inheritance, any other system would afford at least as good a chance of a happy and prosperous population. If our labouring classes now would only restrict their numbers as tightly and systematically as peasant proprietors are assumed by their advocates to do (and as they must do in order to

succeed), it is certain that their social condition would rapidly become, at least, as enviable and as much improved; it is even probable, as we have seen, that a less severe restriction of their numbers would suffice.

So much for the strictly economic part of the question. We now proceed to enquire into its social and political results; and in doing so we shall examine it chiefly as it appears in France, because in that country its operation is more completely unchecked than in any other by the yet lingering influence of those counteracting institutions which elsewhere serve to conceal its inevitable tendencies, and to postpone the period at which these will be fully consummated and exposed to view. We shall, of course, glance at other continental countries as we go along, for the purpose of showing that the same cause operates everywhere in the same manner, in exact proportion as its tendencies are allowed their free and unrestrained development.

The desire to possess land, to become actual proprietors of a portion, however small, of the globe that we inhabit, seems natural to all classes, and prevails in every country. In England it has shown itself in a thousand ways, and in none more clearly than in the eagerness with which thousands of our industrious and saving artisans rushed forward to immolate themselves to Feargus O'Connor's Land Scheme. In Ireland the same feeling has led to daily bloodshed and murder. In Norway, in Flanders, in Switzerland, in Prussia, the desire for land among the peasantry prevails over

almost every other wish. But it is chiefly in the Frenchman that this desire becomes an absolute and blind passion,—the stronger that it is complicated with, and confirmed by, his political affections. Even when the property is too small to admit, without mischief, of further subdivision, the co-heirs are, each of them, so unwilling to lose their hold upon it, that the one who ultimately retains it has to buy out the others at a price very disproportionate to the real value of their shares. Often this arrangement is not effected at all, and the consequence may be seen as we pass in a diligence along the road. "A property," we are told, "which has been divided between two or three heirs, may not, after its division, consist of only two or three distinct portions, but may very probably be divided into six, eight, or a dozen such. This arises from the fact of the co-heirs being all anxious, when the land is of various qualities, and devoted to different purposes, to have a share of each variety; that is, to have equal portions of rich land, meadow, woodland, vineyard, &c. The extent to which this sort of subdivision is sometimes carried would hardly be credited, except upon the highest authority. It appears, for example, from the returns under the official survey, that the commune of Argenteuil, comprising 3830 acres, is distributed into the extraordinary number of 36,883 separate parcels! This, we presume, may be taken as a specimen of what M. de Tocqueville calls, 'grinding the land into the impalpable powder of democracy.'"

The degree in which the natural desire for land has, with the French peasant, degenerated into an unreasoning passion, is well described by several French writers, but by none more vividly than by Michelet in the opening chapter of his wild and absurd rhapsody called "Le Peuple:"—

"Si nous voulons connaître la pensée intime, la passion du paysan de France, cela est fort aisé. Promenons-nous le dimanche dans la campagne, suivons-le. Le voilà qui s'en va là bas devant nous. Il est deux heures; sa femme est à vêpres; il est endimanché; je réponds qu'il va voir sa maîtresse.

"Quelle maîtresse? Sa terre.

"Je ne dis pas qu'il y aille tout droit. Non, ce jour-là il est libre, il est maître d'y aller ou de n'y pas aller. N'y va-t-il pas assez tous les jours de la semaine? Aussi, il se détourne, il va ailleurs, il a affaire ailleurs. Et pourtant, il y va.

"Il est vrai qu'il passait bien près; c'était une occasion. Il la regarde, mais apparemment il n'y entrera pas; qu'y ferait-il? Et pourtant, il y entre.

"Du moins, il est probable qu'il n'y travaillera pas; il est endimanché; il a blouse et chemise blanches. Rien n'empêche cependant d'ôter quelque mauvaise herbe, de réjéter cette pierre. Il y a bien encore cette souche qui gêne, mais il n'a pas sa pioche; ce sera pour demain.

"Alors, il croise ses bras et s'arrête, regarde, serieux, soucieux. Il régarde longtemps, très longtemps, et semble s'oublier. A la fin, s'il se croit observé, s'il aperçoit un passant, il s'éloigne à pas lents. A trente pas encore, il s'arrête, se retourne, et jette sur sa terre un dernier regard, regard profond et sombre, mais tout passionné, tout de cœur, plein de dévotion."

The first consequence of this overweening desire for land, is to run up the price to an inordinate degree. Estates which naturally, and sold as a whole, would only bring twenty-five years' purchase, will, if divided into small plots, fetch readily forty years' purchase.

So well is this known, that if a property of any considerable size comes into the market, it is almost always purchased by some notary or attorney, who then resells it in small lots to peasant proprietors at an enormous profit. But as his customers are seldom or never able to pay him the whole of the purchase-money, he retains a mortgage upon all the petty properties for the unpaid portion; the sum that he receives from them in ready money generally repaying him the whole original outlay, and leaving him still the legal and gratuitous possessor of the soil. Then, as Michelet says, the small landed property of the peasant has this dangerous and fascinating quality: "it is always *incomplete;* it always wants enlarging—a little corner here, a little addition there, to make it perfect." For this enlargement the peasant sometimes lays by, but far oftener *borrows*; and this process continues till his debt makes his proprietorship little more than nominal. He has no idea of any other mode of investing his savings than by buying more land. Even in Auvergne, where the properties are larger, and the proprietors often prosperous, whatever can be earned, or laid by, is spent in the purchase of an adjoining field, at a price often far beyond its real value. The habit of borrowing at five or six per cent. to purchase land, which will not yield above *two* per cent. of return, is very general, and can end only in ruin.* The property must in the end come

* See Michelet, p. 24. This, however, has been greatly modified since the late Emperor introduced in the form of his "open loans" a new and far more attractive investment for the hoards of the peasant.

into the hands of the mortgagees, and the proprietor must become a labourer or pauper, and a malcontent. This passion has not only the effect of turning the attention of the agriculturist from all other investments, and so starving other branches of industry, but it leads him to regard the purchase of land, not as a mode of employing his money which is to yield him a return, but as an outlay for the gratification of fancy; he buys a field as a wealthy Englishman buys a picture, as the indulgence of a luxurious taste.

We see the same effect in other countries, though scarcely in so excessive a degree. Mr. Banfield informs us that along the Rhine such is the rage of the peasants for land, that they do not scruple to give 120*l.* and 150*l.* an acre for it, and this in a country far poorer than ours. They never, he says, bestow a thought on the interest or the profit to be made by such investments. They look only, like the Irishman, to the means of subsistence it may afford them, however wretched and inadequate this subsistence may be. In fact, it is this exclusive attention to the soil as the sole, or the most agreeable, mode of livelihood, that leads alike to rack-rents in Ireland, and to the absurdly extravagant price of land in many parts of the Continent; and, in both cases, the misery and disappointment of the peasant must equally ensue. Sismondi gives the same testimony as to Switzerland:—"Le paysan a vivement le sentiment de ce bonheur attaché à la condition de propriétarie. Aussi est il toujours empressé d'acheter de la terre *à tout prix. Il la paie plus qu'elle ne vaut, plus*

qu'elle ne lui rendra peut-être." Now, it is quite impossible that the disappointment and discontent which must result from this habit of giving more for land than it is worth, and, of course, expecting more from it than it can yield, added to the embarrassment and dependence consequent upon the general "indebtedness" inseparable from the mortgage system we have described, should not produce some of the worst social and political effects—effects which, as we shall see, will meet us at every step of our inquiry.

There is no point on which the advocates of the subdivision of land dwell more strongly, or with greater confidence, than on its supposed tendency to promote among the people reverence for property, and a spirit of political conservatism. No author makes more of this than Mr. Kay. "Wherever," says he, "this system prevails, we find a general and profound respect for that property in which they are themselves sharers, very different from the habits of injury, waste, and dilapidation so often manifested by the English poor; and, in addition, a great disinclination to political agitation, and all rash and ill-considered political changes." Mill and Sismondi hold the same opinion. It seems, on the face of it, natural and certain that the possession of property should bring along with it respect for the institution of property, as well as regard for what belongs to others. It seems almost equally clear that the more property is spread among the community, the more all classes will be interested in the maintenance of that internal peace and tranquillity by

which alone the security of property can be insured, and its resources fully developed; and that revolutions will be less probable and less frequent in exact proportion as the number who may gain by a convulsion is diminished, and the number who must lose by it is increased; in other words, in proportion as the class of *proprietaires* multiplies, and the class of *proletaires* dwindles away. That such results will ensue from the subdivision of land seems, at first sight, so obvious, that we feel disposed to concede the point without examination, and to take for granted the accuracy of the statement. But we are met by the startling fact that, in England, the land *par excellence* of aristocracy and primogeniture, not only is the highest ground taken by all our writers as to the sacredness of property as an institution, but the most sensitive respect to it, as a fact, is manifested by all classes of our people; and at the first rumour of an attack upon it, either in the abstract or the concrete, the whole population is up in arms. An almost slavish reverence for property distinguishes our law, and pervades our national character. Whereas, in France, where subdivision of land is carried to its highest point, where probably *five-sevenths* of the families are proprietors either of land or other real property, not only have the most outrageous and indefensible assaults on the property of individuals and classes been perpetrated in the most recent times; not only have the savings' banks been robbed and the wealthy mulcted in forced loans, but doctrines the most subversive of the rights and even

of the institutions of property have been preached without reprobation, and have been hailed with transport by hundreds of thousands of admiring votaries, prepared to carry them into instant practice. The levelling and despoiling theories of socialism and communism have taken a hold on the popular mind of France, unparalleled in any other country. Emile Thomas, in his national *ateliers*, robbed the rich to lavish on the poor, and the poor to lavish on the still poorer, while Proudhon proclaimed that "all property is theft;" and instead of being punished as a public enemy, or incarcerated as a madman, he is hailed as the founder of a sect, and adored almost as a saint.

The supposed conservative and tranquillising tendency of the law of equal inheritance meets also, apparently, with a similar surprising contradiction. In Switzerland, where the peasant proprietorship had prevailed for centuries, and was imagined to have been crowned with the most complete and unalloyed success, the year 1847 witnessed a series of servile insurrections, miniature revolutions, and, at last, actual civil war; the pervading feature of the fermentation being a conflict between the better and more comfortable classes and those who had little or not enough, and who hoped to mend matters by seizing on the government themselves. Then, in France, in Sardinia, in Austria, and throughout Germany—in almost every country, in fact, where the subdivision of land has been carried to any great extent—the most complete and often bloody revolutions occupied the whole of 1848;

revolutions, be it observed, less political than social (for we have put aside those cases where popular feeling was complicated with hatred towards a foreign domination)—revolutions which consisted not in rebellions against an unpopular dynasty, but in discontent with, and insurrection against, the arrangements of society. During this whole series of political convulsions, Spain and Russia—the lands of magnates and grandees—were undisturbed save by cabinet quarrellings and ministerial intrigues; while England, where a peasant proprietor is as rare as a black swan, and where even the old class of yeomen is nearly as extinct as the mammoth or the dodo—England, full of refugees from every continental country, and swarming with native agitators and Chartist malcontents, saw the storm pass over and around, and yet scarcely raise a ripple on the surface of her tranquil waters.

These respective phenomena—so different from what would have been predicted—so inconsistent with the supposed conservative tendencies of landed subdivision—will lead us to look a little deeper into the question, and may aid us in arriving at the truth. Indeed, the explanation of the apparent anomaly does not seem difficult to discover. The subdivision of the land among the community interests in the security of property and the preservation of order *all who inherit and retain a sufficient portion of this land;* but upon those who are exceptions to this rule—upon those whose parents were too poor or too unfortunate to have land to leave them—upon those younger branches who,

not being able to extract a maintenance out of their fraction of the patrimonial estate, have parted with it for money, and then perhaps spent that money—upon all those the operation of the system is diametrically reversed. They find (as we showed in our examination of the economical working of the law) almost every avenue to wealth, or even competence, closed to them, or already choked up by other competitors; they find all branches of industry and commerce contracted and curtailed under that reduction of a home-demand for luxuries and manufactured articles, which we have seen to be one of the most certain of the secondary consequences of the law of equal inheritance; they find the government obliged yearly to diminish its expenditure, and reduce the number or the remuneration of its servants, as the taxes become more and more difficult to levy from a community of peasant proprietors, whose *nature* it is to have no surplus available either for the merchant or the tax-gatherer. Unless, therefore, population emigrates (which the French do not) or becomes stationary, the claimants on all the secondary means of livelihood increase, as these various means contract or are starved to death by an enforced economy. Year by year these disappointed claimants swell the numbers of that class who are enemies of property because they have none, and to whom any change, any convulsion, offers a prospect of advantage, and can scarcely place in a worse position than before. Thus, the ultimate tendency of the law of subdivision is to make the present proprietors

the *only* class in the community who are interested in the sacredness of property, and in the preservation of order and existing institutions. It increases the number of those interested in *this kind* of property, it is true; but at the same time it strikes at the root of all *other* property, by reducing the value of all other kinds of labour. It multiplies and satisfies one class, but damages and dissatisfies every other; and can, therefore, be wholly safe, only when the satisfied class comprises the whole community. If there are two sons to inherit a small property, it leaves the one, *perhaps*, comfortable and contented, but sends the other forth —a malcontent by necessity, because otiose and resourceless—to swell the ranks out of which Socialists, insurgents, and Red Republicans are recruited, when the day of opportunity arrives.

But *is* even the present proprietor himself so uniformly contented and conservative, so imbued with the reverence due to *all kinds* of property, as he is represented to be? Let Michelet—a Frenchman, and a fanatic in this cause—answer the question. We shall see that he is at issue with Mr Kay, with Sismondi, and with Laing; but we have little doubt he is, in the main, correct.

The peasant proprietor, as a rule, is pinched, and generally embarrassed in his circumstances. We have seen that he is almost always mortgaged, having had to borrow (in order either to add to his farm, or to pay off the portions of his brothers and sisters) "at seven, eight, and ten per cent.," says Michelet; but

we will be content with assuming the usual interest at six per cent. To meet so heavy a drain, his work and his frugality must both be excessive. We quote from Michelet: "Watch him before daylight; you will find him at work, with all his family; even his wife, scarcely out of her confinement, creeps along the dewy earth. At noon, when rocks split with the heat, when the planter's negro gets repose, the volunteer negro takes none. *Behold his food, and compare it with the artisan's; the latter feeds better every day than the peasant on Sunday.* This heroic man thinks that by the power of his will he can do anything—even make war with Time. But Time is not to be vanquished; the struggle continues between usury, which time accumulates, and the strength of man, which it diminishes. The land brings him in two per cent., and usury demands eight. . . . . Are you now surprised that this Frenchman, this merry singer of former days, no longer smiles? Are you surprised if, meeting him on the land which devours him, you find him so gloomy? In passing, you salute him cordially; he will not see you; he slouches his hat. Do not ask him the way; if he answers he may misdirect you. . . . . Thus the peasant becomes more and more bitter and reserved. His heart is too much oppressed to open it to any sentiment of benevolence. *He hates the rich, his neighbour, and the world.* Alone, on this miserable property, as on a desert island, he becomes a savage. His insocia-

bility, proceeding from the feeling of his misery, is irremediable."

A man such as Michelet here describes, proprietor though he be, will be no strenuous defender of institutions, under which he is what he is. He is exactly in the state to lend a ready ear to any wild theorist, any millennial preacher, any designing agitator. He is just in the frame of mind when "the Devil, out of our melancholy and our weaknesses, abuses us to damn us." He is precisely fit to be the easy prey of the socialist emissary or the secret conspirator—of the Proudhons, the Louis Blancs, the Fouriers, the Cabets, and the Blanquis. Accordingly, we find in his advocate and admirer the following direct assault on the sacredness of property and the first principles of common honesty. It is M. Michelet, a writer of no small influence, an historian of no mean reputation, a professor of established rank, who is not ashamed thus clearly to intimate that the interest of money, when inconveniently burdensome, ought not to be paid, because it is the peasant who borrows, and the Jew and the banker who lends. "The people is noble; Europe has remained plebeian. But we must take serious measures for defending this nobility: it is in danger. The peasant, becoming the serf of the usurer, will be not only miserable, but will lose heart. Think you that man, a sad, restless, trembling debtor, afraid to meet his creditor, and skulking about, can preserve much courage? How would it be with a race thus brought up, in awe of the Jew? . . . *The laws must be altered;* law

must undergo this high, moral, and political necessity. . . . . If the present state of things continue, the peasant, far from acquiring, must sell, as he did in the seventeenth century, and become once more a hireling. That would be the downfall, not of a class, but of our country. They pay 500 millions (francs) yearly to the State, *and* 1000 *millions to the usurer.* . . .

"If you were Germans or Italians, I should say, 'Observe the rules of civil equity,' (!) *But you are France;* you are not a nation only, but a principle—a great political principle. *It must be defended at any cost.*"

Is it possible to say in plainer language, "Defraud your creditors, repudiate your debts, rob the bank, trample public and private faith under your feet?" Truly it does appear to us that property, however widely it may be diffused, is neither safe, nor much respected, nor greatly merited in a country where doctrines such as these can be promulgated, in works addressed to the masses by eminent writers and metropolitan professors such as M. Michelet. And he is far from being single in his misty notions of integrity. Language almost as indefensible may be found in Louis Blanc, and in Eugene Sue, and George Sand, the most popular and brilliant novelists in France.

The subdivision of land, then, it would appear, may strengthen the reverence of property in one class (though even this is by no means, as we see, uniform or certain), and may augment the numbers of that class, but it weakens this sentiment in all other classes,

as long as these classes continue to exist. If there were no younger children, if all individuals in the community were proprietors of land, and if all these proprietors were unencumbered, then the system would unquestionably promote respect for the institution of property. But these are three vital, immense, and, as far as we can see, unrealisable postulates.

If the subdivision of the land introduces one conservative element into the constitution of society, it must not be forgotten that it extinguishes another. If it multiplies peasant proprietors, it destroys the aristocracy. Now, whatever be the various opinions we may entertain as to the use or desirableness of an aristocracy, we shall none of us be disposed to deny that, where its privileges are not excessive, and where its power is not abused, it is emphatically *the* conservative element in society—the most conservative of all the ingredients of which society is composed. Whether, therefore, the law of equal inheritance is to be regarded as favourable or unfavourable to the stability of political institutions will depend upon our decision of the question, whether a multitude of small proprietors, or a smaller and more combined number of great proprietors, are likely to be most hostile to change, and most powerful to resist it. A numerous body of small proprietors, spread over the whole country, and dividing among them the entire surface of the soil, will, no doubt, where they are prosperous and contented, form a substantial barrier to any violent or sudden changes in the national government and

institutions. But even this proposition can only be admitted with considerable modifications. In the first place, the class of yeomen are seldom distinguished by any extraordinary intelligence out of their own immediate department; they take little interest in political questions, nor do they care about the solution of them, except in as far as they directly and manifestly affect their own position, and come into contact with their daily life. For speculative or party politics they will trouble themselves but little; they neither feel the vivid interest in these matters that distinguishes the restless, intellectual, and exciteable population of the towns, nor have they any of that tenacious devotion to old ideas and associations, which forms the main strength of conservatism among the adherents and dependants of a beloved and respected feudal aristocracy. They do not respond readily, nor awake easily, to any but mere material considerations. Any public convulsion which would imperil their property or augment their taxation they might be relied upon for resisting, strenuously and doggedly, *as soon as they perceived its bearing:* but if they had nothing, or thought that they had nothing, to fear on this head, the expulsion of a dynasty, or the change of one form of government for another, are matters which regard and would disturb them in a very slight degree.

Again, their resistance to any political changes will seldom be more than passive. They may manifest on occasion wonderful *vis inertiæ*, but they will rarely rouse themselves to vigorous and aggressive effort.

They are not a body who are accustomed to combined action, or to whom either action or combination would be easy; on the contrary, their whole condition is essentially one of unsociability, self-containment, and isolation. They have nothing of that prompt and energetic *esprit de corps* which belongs to parties trained by long usage, and compelled by their position to associate for self-defence against other powerful and conflicting interests. Hence they are no match for the restless and intelligent citizens of a metropolis, full of mental activity, masters of the whole science of political organisation, devoted to their leaders, and fanatical in their attachment to a watchword or a principle. The conservatism of the class of peasant proprietors will seldom be more than *selfish* and *inert*, and, in consequence, limited and ineffectual. It is obvious how inferior in effective strength, in adequacy to meet and hold in check those elements of turbulence and movement which always exist in such vigour and abundance among the inhabitants of large towns, this conservatism must be, when compared with that of an hereditary aristocracy of vast possessions, living on their estates, surrounded by attached dependants, who respect them for their individual virtues as well as for their ancestral name, sharing in all the intellectual activity of the age, versed in political science, trained to public life, to combined action, and to the invigorating discipline of party. It is true that an oppressive aristocracy, one which has alienated the affections, and trampled on the rights of its vassals, which has neglected its duties and

abused its powers, has a revolutionary as well as a conservative operation; but the same may be said of an unprosperous and discontented class of peasant proprietors, which, as we have seen, may exist. To form a fair relative estimate of the political tendencies of the two institutions, we must compare them under circumstances in which both have been successful—in which both have duly discharged their functions and attained their ends.

Recent events in France have been strongly confirmatory of these views. The revolution of 1848 was effected in Paris without the slightest opposition from the supposed conservative element; it was accepted by the *country* without remonstrance, almost with indifference; and it was not till property was attacked, till the whole social structure was threatened with destruction, and *till new taxes were imposed,* that the rural population, the class of peasant proprietors, began to rouse itself, like a strong man after sleep, and march to the rescue of society, which, after all, they might have proved inadequate to save, without the exertions and fidelity of the old standing army.

"It was the old policy of France and Spain," says Mr Laing, "to draw the nobility from their estates and country residences, where they were powerful, and might be formidable, and to introduce them to the expenses, honours, and dependence of a court life. The Revolution proved in France that this state policy had been carried too far. *No intermediate body with social influence had been left in the country.* Brittany and La Vendée alone had a resident class of nobles or country gentlemen, who were too poor to be attached to a splendid and expensive court; and there alone was found a class to support the throne. A similar body of landed

proprietors spread over France would have mediated as a third element between the throne and the people, and might have averted the horrors and anarchy of the Revolution. Every succeeding movement in France proves the want of some third element in the social body, between the executive power and the people. To this want must be ascribed the influence of Paris in all its social action in France. The country has no third element, in its present social structure, between the governing and the governed. Paris alone is this third element for all France."

This extinction of an hereditary and powerful aristocracy, and the substitution of a numerous class of small proprietors, consequent upon the establishment of the law of equal inheritance, has generally been represented as favouring the interests of freedom. We question whether this is not a superficial, or, rather, a partial view of the matter. Thus much, at least, is certain: that those monarchs and statesmen, like Lous XIV., Frederick II., and Cardinal Richelieu, whose systematic policy it was to weaken, humble, and impoverish the nobles of their respective countries, did not act thus out of any tender regard for liberty or individual right. Their aim in sweeping away the aristocracy was to remove a barrier to the establishment of their own despotic power. This also is certain: that, of all old-established states, aristocratic England is the one where personal freedom is the most complete, and the most diffused among all classes; and that liberty of individual action was fettered and usurped in Republican France and in subdivided Germany to a degree which, to a Briton, would be scarcely distinguishable from slavery. This, finally, is certain: that in the two great crises of our national history, the two great epochas

when English liberties were threatened, defended, and enlarged—the reigns of John and of Charles I.—it was our aristocracy and our country gentlemen who stood forth in the front ranks of the cause of popular rights. The Magna Charta was won by barons; the question of ship-money was tried by a Buckinghamshire squire; Pym, Hampden, and most of the leaders of the Long Parliament, belonged to what was then termed the country party.

The truth we believe to be, that the extinction of an hereditary nobility, by removing the barrier between the people and the government, lays each of these parties more open to the assaults and encroachments of the other: the people will be more easily oppressed, and the government more easily overthrown. Where an aristocracy has been overbearing, cruel, and unjust, as has too often been the case, its destruction is the overthrow of a tyranny, but not necessarily the substitution of freedom: it may be, and often will be, a mere change of oppressors, and the new oppression may be more galling than the old. The stability of the government, as well as the liberty of the subject, depend upon other arrangements. The amount of personal freedom enjoyed by the individual, depends, as we shall presently see, almost entirely upon the question, how far municipal or bureaucratic institutions, self-government or functionarism, pervade the nation. Whatever, therefore, has a tendency to increase the number or rivet the hold of these functionaries, is, *ipso facto*, unfavourable to individual liberty; and this is equally true whether

the state is termed a republic or an empire. Now, the law of equal inheritance has a direct and most powerful tendency to increase the number of those public functionaries, who already swarm to such an extent in both Germany and France, as to interfere with freedom of action in almost every moment and every transaction of daily life. It is true, as we showed in the early part of this Paper, that the difficulty of levying a sufficient revenue on a community of small proprietors has, by starving the resources out of which these functionaries are paid, a strong counteracting tendency—a tendency which may, in the end, overpower the other. But the first effect is what we have stated: the difficulty of finding remunerative employment in trade or handicraft, on which we have already dwelt so fully, creates such a multitude of claimants—of mendicants in fact—for the poorest post under government, that any reduction in their number has practically been found impossible. The French are compelled to retain their intolerable system of passports, because its abolition would deprive a large number of functionaries of their bread, and cause an outcry which no government dare to face. In the same manner they dared not revise their restrictive commercial policy, till Louis Napoleon imposed his wiser will upon them, because such revision would entail a diminution of their vast army of *douaniers*; and those who would thus be thrown out of work, would go to swell the already formidable ranks of the turbulent and discontented, because unemployed and unfed, population of the towns—the *classes dan-*

gereuses of Paris, Lyons, and Bordeaux. Thus no reduction in the number of the public functionaries can safely take place in France; while in Austria one curious but very natural consequence of the revolution of 1848 has been actually to augment the pay of many of the officials, and thus very greatly, but also again very naturally, to disgust the tax-paying peasant proprietor.

Much might be said about functionarism; but our only concern with it here is in so far as it is fostered by peasant proprietorship and is inimical to freedom. The following remarks of Mr Laing have much weight; though we would not be understood to endorse them all:

"Whatever be the form of government, a third element between the power of the state, and the physical force of the people, is indispensable for the security of freedom, and the stability of social institutions. The aristocracy, or the clergy of the Church of Rome, or both, formed this third element in the middle ages. With us, the class of capitalists, of men of high intellectual and moral character, displayed in situations of importance, and the strong prestige in favour of birth, fortune, and manners, and of what we call the nobility and gentry—a class very different from the feudal aristocracy of the Continent, and depending for social influence on popular esteem, and not on royal favour—constitute this third element in our social structure. But no equivalent class, with social influence to stand between the monarchic and democratic elements in the social body, has formed itself, or can form itself, on the Continent, where the property of land, which is almost the only kind of property, is universally distributed into small and almost equal portions. Where all are equal, or nearly so, no pre-eminent social influence is accorded to property; and the only influence remaining is that of military or civil authority held under the Crown or the executive power. The people have no independent representatives; no leaders or defenders of importance and weight, either with their

own body or with their rulers; no influential organs of public opinion; nothing, in short, to oppose to misgovernment and oppression but physical force. This is a social state much nearer to a military despotism than to a free constitution. If we sit down, and try to sketch that social condition which practically must be, of all others, the least favourable to the establishment and permanence of free institutions, and to the liberty of a people, we come unexpectedly and unwillingly to the conclusion, that it is the social condition which approaches most nearly to a more perfect equality. Liberty and equality! These are two elements which cannot co-exist in society. . . . A military [or civil] aristocracy is the only government applicable, or perhaps possible, in this social state of agrarian equality."

Mr Laing states his conclusions somewhat broadly, but thus much we must admit as unquestionable; that in almost every country where the aristocracy has been extinguished or sapped by the subdivision of the land, the interference of the civil authorities with individual action is most oppressive and intolerable, and wholly at variance with English notions of freedom; and that the very same characteristics of inertia, unintellectuality, and uncombiningness, which we have noticed as rendering the class of small proprietors powerless against the energetic and revolutionary population of the towns, will render them equally defenceless against the encroaching and compressing influence of the governing powers.

But, at all events (it will be said), whether the law of equal inheritance be or be not favourable to political stability, and civil liberty, there can be no question that it operates powerfully to spread pacific dispositions among the people, and will in time, if persevered in, put an end to international wars. Nearly all writers,

except Mr Laing, having taken this view of the subject. "They suppose that war never can be the choice of a people generally possessed of property, and having a preponderating influence and voice in their own public affairs; because property, especially landed property, which cannot be concealed, suffers in war equally from friend and foe, by taxation or devastation; and where the great mass of the people are landed proprietors, having this obvious interest in avoiding war, the most self-willed government must be constrained, they conceive, to maintain peace." The view appears plausible at first sight, but we shall see reason to question its soundness when we look a little more closely into the secondary operation of this cherished law. The common error of the writers who have treated of this subject has been to look only at the operation of territorial subdivision upon one class of the community, and to ignore its effect upon all other classes. We are again driven back upon the inquiry, *What becomes of the younger sons?* Of those who receive their portion in money, because the patrimonial inheritance will not admit of further *morcellement*, and who go forth to seek their fortune, many flock to the towns to engage in some branch of industry or trade, and, on arriving there, they find, as we have shown, all these branches not only already overstocked, but narrowed more and more every succeeding year by that peculiar operation of peasant proprietorship which we have just traced out in detail. Many more flock to the towns in the hope of obtaining some appointment under government

—appointments against the number and the remuneration of which, as we have seen, the same peasant proprietorship necessarily wages an unceasing war. Michelet, in his work called "Le Peuple," draws a most pitiable picture of both these classes—of the disappointment which attends most of the aspirants, and of the paltry pittance on which even the successful competitors must be content to live. It is among these two classes that the war party find their readiest recruits; it is these who are loudest in echoing the war-cry, whensoever, by whomsoever and on what pretext soever, it may be raised. Nothing can be more natural, nothing more inevitable; all other avenues to occupation and to wealth have met their advances with an impassable barrier or a rude repulse. Unless they see a chance of carving their fortune out of civil commotion, military service is the only thing left them to fall back upon. War opens to them a vista of the most brilliant possibilities. Behind them lie penury, obscurity, a hopeless struggle against adverse destiny; before them a career, bright and beckoning, of advancement, victory, and renown. Even in those cases where the patrimonial estate is large enough to afford a prospective inheritance to all the members of the family, the same result ensues, though by a rather different process.

"In almost every peasant proprietor's family," says Mr Laing, "there are one or two grown-up young men, the sons and heirs of the labouring proprietor, who have no employment at home till the small estate becomes vacant by the death of their parents. Their additional labour is not required for its cultivation while

the parent is able to work. It is, however, a secure living to look to, and to fall back upon after the parent's death. This mass of population includes a large proportion of all the youth of France and Germany, of an age and habits suitable for military service. In France alone there are 10,282,946 landed proprietors (?) If we allow one-third of these to belong to heads of families, with sons grown up while the parent is still able to work and cultivate his little property, what a vast body of young men do we find, in this social state, ever ready and eager for military service and warfare! To learn a trade or handicraft which cannot subsist them until they have acquired it, and which they would have to abandon as soon as their little heritages fall to them, is by no means as suitable to their position in life, even in a prudential view, as to enter into military service, in which they are fed, clothed, and lodged from the very first day, are engaged for a term of years which they can very well spare, and are then free to return to their little heritages, or to re-engage according to their prospects. . . . War would thus seem to be a necessary sequence of the social state of those countries in which landed property is generally and almost equally distributed—war abroad, or tumult and revolution at home. This is clearly shown in Switzerland. The Swiss youth are scattered over Europe and America, in various temporary employments, as servants, innkeepers, adventurers. Switzerland manufactures, also, to no inconsiderable extent, for foreign markets. Yet with all these outlets and employments for her youth, Switzerland furnishes regiments to Naples, Rome, and other Italian States, and keeps, in reality, a very large standing army, in proportion to her population, always on foot, but always in foreign pay. . . . This social state—a state, namely, in which temporary employment is more suitable than life-long application to one pursuit; this social element—the youth of a country *living in present idleness, yet in certainty of future subsistence*, has, in every age and nation, and even in every family, impeded industry and application to the useful and peaceful arts, and engendered a spirit of temporary exertion, and a wild craving for excitement which warfare only can gratify. . . . This prodigious development of an element of warfare in the new social state of Europe, may well make the observer of our times pause before he admits that universal and perpetual peace is a necessary result of a universal diffusion of landed property."

It is, moreover, a mistake to suppose that even the peasant proprietors themselves—the actual holders and cultivators of the soil—are *necessarily*, by interest and position, hostile to war. Not only do they often share the notion that war is a provision for their younger brothers and younger sons—and we know how, even in this country, many a sturdy and reluctant taxpayer is a vehement opponent of any abolition of sinecures, or reduction in the army or the navy, if he has a son to be provided for, or a brother to be promoted—but the idea that *war may be waged at the enemy's cost*, as in the early days of Napoleon, is firmly rooted in the minds of a large portion of the community, and is fostered by men from whom better thoughts might be expected.

Our survey of this great question, then, has shown much ground for believing that the prevalent opinion as to the social, political, and economic consequences of the subdivision of land, is partial, incomplete, and therefore, of necessity, erroneous; that the law of equal inheritance is by no means as favourable to peace, to freedom, to political tranquillity, or to the *general* prosperity of the community, as it is commonly represented to be; that these happy results can only ensue when the possessors of land shall have become the sole class of the community, having absorbed or superseded every other class; that, in fine, a nation *consisting* of small proprietors may ultimately be peaceful, prosperous, conservative, and free, but scarcely a nation merely *comprising* such a class,

especially if that class be preponderating, and artificially fostered and increased; and that the system of peasant proprietorship therefore, if persisted in, must lead to, and if successful must involve, a population stationary in numbers, and, as we shall shortly perceive, stationary in civilisation also.

But we shall not be in a position to pronounce a definite judgment on this mighty question, till we have considered what would be the effect produced on the general tone and character of society by the subdivision of land, when the system had attained its full development and worked out its final issue—what would be its operation on *civilisation*, using the word in its widest signification, that is to say, on the progress of humanity in the elaboration of its highest capacities, and the achievement of its noblest destinies.

Now, in order to see our way clearly towards a reply to these inquiries, we must assume the law of equal inheritance to have completed its work; we must imagine the perilous and painful process by which the class of peasant proprietors is to starve out and absorb into itself every other class to have been undergone and overpast; we must suppose the population to have become almost, or altogether, stationary, and the whole community to be one uniform body of small, but comfortable and *well-to-do* land-owners. How or at what cost this transition state can be got through, we confess we do not clearly see; the problem may prove practically insoluble; but we will suppose the difficulty successfully surmounted, and the social condition so

much desired to be finally achieved ; and we have now to ask ourselves how it will operate on the deeper interests and higher prospects of our race ?

It is not to be denied that a state of universal competence, in which there shall be no inordinate wealth and no sordid indigence ; from which extravagance and pauperism shall be alike excluded ; where a redundant population and excessive competition shall no longer condemn the child to premature, nor the man to overwhelming, labour ; where industry and temperance shall be sure of their reward ; where every man shall be happy,

> "——whose wish and care
> A few paternal acres bound,
> Content to breathe his native air
> In his own ground ;"

where every man shall "sit under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid ;"—it is not to be denied that a state such as this is, even in prospect, full of fascination for those who, like ourselves, have been long saddened and perplexed by the multitudinous anomalies, the startling extremes, the sore moral maladies, the grievous physical sufferings, which disfigure the actual society around us. We regard with a sense of unspeakable relief the picture of a social state from which are banished nearly all the evils which have so long baffled and amazed us here—which have driven the philanthropist to despair, the wretched to rebel, and the religious man to seek refuge in another life against the sorrows and sufferings which seem incurable in this. The mere idea

that such a comparative Paradise is attainable, disposes us to listen with impatient indignation to the doubter who throws cold water on our enthusiasm, by calling upon us to pause and inquire whether this apparent Eden may not have some counterbalancing disadvantages which, in our zeal, we have overlooked, and whether it may not have to be purchased at a price which it would be shallow wisdom and sorry economy to pay. Even gold, it is said, may be bought too dear.

There is, no doubt, much, very much, to admire in the social condition of the Swiss and the Norwegian, and much, very much, to deplore in our own. It is sad to see the intensity of pursuit which with us, in every line, seems essential to success; it is sad to see so many thousands whose whole existence, from the cradle to the grave, is one breathless hurry—a race, a struggle, and a strife; it is lamentable to see one class who live only to toil, side by side with another who live only to squander; and we are tempted to think how far more enviable is that nation where every one has something and nobody has much.

"Tutus caret obsoleti
Sordibus tecti;
Caret invidendâ
Sobrius aulâ."

But a state of material comfort, though embellished by content and free from the grinding anxieties which too commonly beset a struggling existence, is not the highest position nor the sole good for humanity to aim

at. A society composed of one uniform class, enjoying a universally diffused competence, will be stationary, possibly stagnant, not progressive, in its character. Now, progress is the very essence of civilisation. Contentment is a blessed thing, but the content which arises from having achieved much, and the content which consists in being satisfied with little, have very different influences on national as on individual development. There is a content which rests in a lazy and unambitious mediocrity, which buries its talent in the earth, acquiesces in a stagnant vegetation, and aspires after no higher existence; and there is a content which flows out of a just estimate of the objects of exertion and the ends of life, the result of having aspired after attainable and worthy aims, not of having been devoid of aspirations altogether. The one is the last and noblest victory of the ripened mind, the other is the most fatal enemy to the amelioration and maturity of the race. There are two sources which foster in the bosom of a nation the elements of the higher civilisation: the stimulus of necessity, and the facilities of leisure. *In a community of peasant proprietors both these will be absent.* Men who are secure of finding in the quiet culture of the soil a maintenance adequate to their few requirements, and who see no prospect and no motive for rising above the level mediocrity of their neighbours, are wholly without that spur to strenuous exertion which works such miracles in less monotonous and less comfortable communities, which so often makes the poor man fight his way to

wealth, and the industrious man to leisure, and the uneducated man to the loftiest heights of poetry and science. An assured competence, however small, is, of all the foes to energy and success, the most fatal and the most paralysing. Accordingly, we find that sameness and stationariness characterise nations among whom peasant proprietors predominate and give the tone.

"This state of society," says Mr Laing, "is necessarily stationary at a certain attainment of well-being. It is not, and cannot be, progressive. It admits of no advance in the means and ways of living, acting, or thinking, beyond a certain fixed hereditary standard; and one generation cannot afford to acquire or to gratify any higher tastes or wants than those of the generation which preceded it. In the countries or districts in which this social state has been established for ages, as in Switzerland, the Tyrol, Norway, Flanders, the man of the nineteenth century is the man of the fourteenth. His way of living, his way of thinking, his diet, dwelling, dress, his tastes, wants, and enjoyments, his ideas, his civilisation, are stereotyped. . . . The having enough for the most simple wants and tastes of a working agricultural life, the contentedness of a whole population with this 'enough,' and the legal impediment, from the equal division of property among the children, to any class in the community attaining permanently more than this enough, may be a very happy social state, and altogether in accordance with the spirit and precepts of ancient philosophers; but it is a philosophy of barbarism, not of civilisation—a social state of routine and stagnation, not of activity and progress. . . . Hereditary wealth is too rare for the individuals possessing it to form a class in society. . . . The want of such a class, with more than the bare means of living, and with the leisure to apply to higher material or intellectual objects than the supplying of their household wants by their own household work, is not favourable to the progress of society. The material objects and interests must predominate over those intellectual and moral ones which dignify man as motives to action, but which must remain almost dormant in society if there be no class free from the cares of daily

subsistence, and with the education and leisure which only an opulent class can command, to cultivate and act on them. Education of an ordinary kind may be widely diffused in this social state; reading, writing, and useful acquirements may be imparted to all the population, and yet education may be very defective and uninfluential, and may lose in depth what it gains in breadth. Few in this social state are in a condition to enter into those higher studies and sciences which not only elevate the individual to a high pitch of mind, but give society itself the language, ideas, and spirit of a higher intellectual condition."

In fact, without necessity to stimulate talent in the mass, and without an opulent and leisure class to cultivate and to reward scientific and literary eminence, the very elements and conditions of the nobler civilisation will be wanting. Intellectual cultivation will be monotonous and mediocre, even if it do not become wholly utilitarian: the abstract, the profound, and the poetic, will be in imminent danger of being starved out of existence by want of the encouragement on which alone they can thrive. Moreover, a society of equals, with no hierarchy of gradations to cement them into one mass, will be a mere aggregation of independent units, isolated and self-contained, with no mental collision, and little varied interchange of thought. All being occupied in the same pursuits, and living in the same intellectual and moral atmosphere, there can be little of that diversity of view and opposition of ideas by which truth is elicited and intelligence aroused. It is not out of a *nation* of peasant proprietors, though it may occasionally be out of their *class*, that poets, artists, philosophers, or astronomers can come forth. Where, among such, could Shakspere or Dante, Phidias

or Canova, Plato or Bacon, Copernicus, Galileo, or La Place, find the appreciation upon which they live, the reward to which they aspire, or the sustenance and stimulus without which they could not struggle into being? No! Material well-being, the absence of want, a diffused uniformity of comfort, are valuable attainments, and amply worth much effort to compass; but there is something beyond and above all these—something for which a portion of these may wisely be emperilled and sacrificed; that perpetual progress, namely, that ceaseless aspiration, that illimitable striving after loftier and still loftier heights in knowledge, in wisdom, in conception, in achievement, which constitute at once the nobility of the individual, the glory of the nation, the hope and the grandeur of the race.

Even the favourable picture which we have adopted from the advocates of peasant proprietorship of the state of material comfort, steady industry, and security of social position which it engenders, has its reverse side. Security has its injurious as well as its serviceable action on the character and habits; and men who do not strive to rise will not always be able to prevent themselves from falling. There is much truth in the following remarks, though we are not prepared to adopt them without allowance. "The security afforded by the possession of a patch of land is often worse than insecurity. Granting that its owner is aware that, in ordinary seasons, its produce will suffice to support himself and his family, he cannot fail to be at the same time impressed with the conviction that his destiny is

fixed and irrevocable; that he has no means of advancing himself; and that he and his successors must continue to pass their days in the same unnoticed obscurity and poverty. And it is scarcely possible that he should have this conviction without being listless, and the slave of routine practices. The happiness of peasant proprietors seems very much akin to that of oysters: they are ignorant and satisfied. . . . Their security is not a source of activity and wealth, but of indolence and poverty, and goes far to extinguish that desire to excel and to rise to a higher station which is the origin of all improvement, and of whatever is refined and exalted. 'The small proprietors and farmers of France (says Dr. Birkbeck) having no means of improving their condition, submit to necessity, and pass their lives contentedly.' It is customary at this moment, in several of the southern departments of that kingdom, as it was 3000 years ago to thresh corn by treading it out by horses and oxen." * The fact is, we fear, that from the law of our imperfect nature, content and progress can rarely go together, nor competence and laborious ambition. The fate of the yeomen class in England—especially of those "statesmen," as they are termed, who still linger in Cumberland and Westmoreland—is a confirmatory comment on this text. Their fifty or sixty acres of hereditary land, though amply sufficient to maintain them in homely abundance, is not enough fully to

* M'Culloch, "Treatise on Succession," p. 90.

employ their time, or arouse their dormant energies. In a deplorable proportion of cases they become dawdling and inactive, suffer dreadfully from the *tedium vitæ*, take to drinking, get into difficulties, and are ultimately compelled to sell their patrimonial estates to some wealthier and more energetic neighbour. The class is fast dying out.

We have now gone fully into the consideration of this momentous and deeply interesting social problem; and we will sum up the results in a few brief sentences. We believe that the compulsory (or universally customary) partition of land would, in the end, lead to a state of society which neither the philosopher nor the statesman could regard with complacency; a state which appears attractive only where its first operation is exclusively seen, and its ultimate consequences are kept out of view; a state which, after the effects of its incipient and incomplete application have been reaped, must be hostile in its further progress to peace, to freedom, to political tranquillity and permanence; a state which, when entirely reached (if this be ever possible), would be fatal alike to the multiplication and the progress of mankind. At the same time it is monstrous that industrious men should be unable to obtain land and to rise into the position of proprietors: not only should all obstacles in their way be removed, but every encouragement should be given them to attempt and to succeed. The subdivision of land should be left wholly free—should be neither impeded nor enforced by legislation. Entails should be abolished; the law, which

in England confers the real property of an intestate upon the eldest son or the nearest male heir, and that which in France compels the division equally among the children, should be both abrogated. Legislative restrictions once removed, variety of individual opinion would then operate to produce a varied social state; there would be large estates, and wealthy proprietors, and a leisure class, to supply the conservative element and encourage the higher civilization; and there would be peasant properties to form the stepping-stone and the reward for those among the labourers who had the desire and the capacity to rise. There would be an educated class to cultivate the nobler fields of intellect and science; there would be an aristocracy to stand between the people and the throne; there would be a peasantry contended even when striving and ambitious, because conscious of no injustice, and irritated by no insuperable obstacles; and there would be a yeomanry to complete and consolidate the social hierarchy.—1850.

UNSOUND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY.

PERHAPS the two features which have most distinguished the public mind of Britain during the last few years are, a quick perception and conscientious sense of our social evils,—and an entire want of system and philosophy in our mode of treating and regarding them. Till the continental convulsions of the last twelve months threw for the time all other matters into the shade, the public attention seemed to be fixing itself upon the miseries and maladies of our population with an almost morbid intensity; and with an impatience of endurance, and a craving for action, as alarming to the philosopher as it was encouraging and consolatory to the mere philanthropist. Most of the topics which had formerly absorbed the interest of the nation were settled and forgotten. The agitating questions of foreign policy, parliamentary reform, and religious toleration, were well nigh disposed of; and the vast field of colonial policy, which for some years to come will probably occupy the front rank in popular and parliamentary interest, had as yet scarcely been opened. No wonder, therefore, that the regular campaigns of party warfare, from the absence of those great subjects which had divested them of their littleness, were beginning to be trite and wearisome. In the pause from

conflicts, both internal and external, which ensued, people had leisure to look at home, and to inquire into their domestic position. And what they saw might well stagger and appal them. Meanwhile, benevolent individuals had long been busy in examining and exposing those particular grievances or sufferings which had severally attracted their imagination or their pity. Each philanthropist had his pet evil. Some mused and discoursed on that congeries of undigested symptoms which they termed "The Condition-of-England Question." Others, less comprehensive in their sympathy, or less ambitious in their zeal, were content to divide the labours of social reformation. One man considered the factory population as his peculiar charge. Another took coal mines under his especial protection. A third organised a crusade against drunkenness; a fourth occupied himself with the statistics of education; a fifth affected juvenile criminals; a sixth paupers; a seventh looked after slaves; an eighth threw his ægis over the natives in remote colonies;—till the unfortunate agricultural peasants were the only portion of our population that seemed neglected and forgotten. No "Protector of the Aborigines" sprung up for them: For those on whom this office should naturally have devolved, were busy in other fields.

Two great benefits have resulted from this widespread and irregular activity. In the first place, we have collected an invaluable mass of information on the condition, moral and physical, of nearly every branch

of the poorer classes, to guide us in our efforts for their amelioration; and, secondly, we have at last penetrated the public mind with the sincere conviction that these matters possess for us a personal, paramount, and urgent interest with which no question of foreign policy or party struggle can for a moment vie. The task of restoring health and soundness to a society so fearfully diseased as ours unquestionably is, is on all hands acknowledged to be at once the noblest, and the most imperative, to which citizens or statesmen can now direct their energies.

But the mass of dismal and disheartening facts which these investigations have brought to light, has a strong tendency to disseminate an impression at once mischievous and untrue. We hear it frequently assumed, that these evils are novel and increasing; that our social condition is fast degenerating; that we are nationally on the brink of a precipice, from which time is scarcely left us to draw back. Now, that this impression is not only untrue, but the very reverse of truth, is unquestionable, to all who have either read history in detail or who have been long actively engaged in the labours of philanthropy—to all, in fact, but those whose attention to these subjects has been of recent date, and whose knowledge of the evil has therefore burst upon them suddenly. Those who have been longest, most profoundly and practically conversant with "the wounds and bruises and putrefying sores" of the body politic—who have been well aware that, "from the sole of the foot even to the head there is

no soundness therein"—are the last to be dissatisfied with our progress hitherto, or to despair of our progress in future. It is not Arkwright or the elder Peel who would quarrel with the present discipline and ventilation of our factories. It is not Howard or Mrs. Fry who would now be horror-struck at the condition of our prisons; nor Romilly or Mackintosh who would complain of the atrocities and enormities of our actual criminal jurisprudence. Mr. Macaulay's admirable remarks in the third chapter of his History, on comparisons of this kind so often loosely made to our disadvantage, deserve the deep consideration of those who have been startled either into terror or despondency by the pictures of vice and wretchedness which recent inquiries have laid bare.

"The more carefully," says he, "we examine the history of the past, the more reason we shall find to dissent from those who imagine that our age has been fruitful of new social evils. The truth is, that the evils are, with scarcely an exception, old. That which is new, is the intelligence which discerns and the humanity which remedies them. The more we study the annals of the past, the more shall we rejoice that we live in a merciful age,—in an age in which cruelty is abhorred, and in which pain, even when deserved, is inflicted reluctantly, and from a sense of duty. Every class doubtless has gained greatly by this great moral change: but the class which has gained most is the poorest, the most dependent, and the most defenceless.

"The general effect of the evidence seems hardly to admit of doubt. Yet, in spite of evidence, many will still image to themselves the England of the Stuarts as a more pleasant country than the England in which we live. It may at first sight seem strange that society, while constantly moving forward with eager speed, should be constantly looking back with tender regret. But these two propensities, inconsistent as they may appear, can easily be resolved into the same principle. Both spring from our impatience of the state in which we actually are. That impatience, while it stimulates us to surpass preceding generations, disposes us to overrate their happiness. It is, in some sense, unreasonable and ungrateful in us to be constantly discontented with a condition which is constantly improving. But, in truth there is constant improvement, precisely because there is constant discontent. If we were perfectly satisfied with the present, we should cease to labour, to contrive, and to save with a view to the future. And it is natural that, being dissatisfied with the present, we should form a too favourable estimate of the past.

"In truth we are under a deception similar to that which misleads the traveller in the Arabian desert. Beneath the caravan all is dry and bare; but far in advance, and far in the rear, is the semblance of refreshing waters. The pilgrims hasten forward, and find nothing but sand, where, an hour before, they had seen a lake. They turn their eyes and see a lake where, an hour before, they were toiling through sand. A similar

illusion seems to haunt nations through every stage of the long progress from poverty and barbarism to the highest degrees of opulence and civilisation. But if we resolutely chase the mirage backward, we shall find it recede before us into the regions of fabulous antiquity. It is now the fashion to place the golden age of England in times when noblemen were destitute of comforts, the want of which would be intolerable to a modern footman, when farmers and shopkeepers breakfasted on loaves the very sight of which would raise a riot in a modern workhouse, when men died faster in the purest country air than they now die in the most pestilential lanes in our towns, and when men died faster in the lanes of our towns than they now die on the coast of Guiana. We, too, shall in our turn be outstripped, and in our turn be envied. It may well be, in the twentieth century, that the peasant of Dorsetshire may think himself miserably paid with fifteen shillings a-week; that the carpenter at Greenwich may receive ten shillings a-day; that labouring men may be as little used to dine without meat as they now are to eat rye bread; that sanitary police and medical discoveries may have added several more years to the average length of human life; that numerous comforts and luxuries which are now unknown, or confined to a few, may be within the reach of every diligent and thrifty working man. And yet it may then be the mode to assert that the increase of wealth and the progress of science have benefited the few at the expense of the many; and to talk of the reign of Queen

Victoria as the time when England was truly merry England, when all classes were bound together by brotherly sympathy, when the rich did not grind the faces of the poor, and when the poor did not envy the splendour of the rich."—Vol. i. p. 426.

But the impression of which we speak is not only incorrect; it is noxious, as all incorrect conceptions are. It was a profound remark of Augustus Schlegel's,—"The illusion of a past golden age is one of the greatest hindrances to the approach of the golden age that should come. *If the golden age is past, it was not genuine.*" The idea that we are degenerating—that our national evils and our social maladies are increasing upon us—can scarcely fail to have a paralysing influence upon our energies. If the exertions of the last generation—which, though often misdirected, were sincere, indefatigable, and sometimes almost gigantic—failed to mitigate the intensity, or arrest the progress, of these ills, there is reason enough to drive the boldest among us to despair. What are we, that we should hope to succeed where predecessors, at least as able, as strenuous, as benevolent as ourselves, have utterly and signally failed! But the truth is, that the efforts of these our predecessors were crowned with an appropriate measure of success. So have been our own. And it is only by cherishing this faith, that we can effectually nerve ourselves for the further toils and struggles of our continued war with evil.

But this incorrect impression as to the remoter past is injurious in another way. It misdirects our efforts.

It disposes us to *try back*. If our ancestors were really happier, wiser, more successful than we,—if the condition of the people were really more satisfactory in those days than in these,—there would be a powerful argument for attempting to retrace our steps, and striving to replace society in the position it occupied in generations past. A double blunder, this: for not only would the operation prove an impossible one—but, if achieved, would be only an aggravation of our difficulties. As long as these ideas are confined to secluded and speculative thinkers, they produce merely feeble poetry and faulty philosophy. When, however, as in our days, they penetrate the arena of actual statesmanship, and endeavour to force their way into life and action, they not only divert attention from a sounder channel, but lead to practical mistakes of the worst kind. The crude and boyish theories, the vague and declamatory language, of the Young England section of our legislators, have given us the measure at once of the wild impracticability and unsoundness of their views, and of the mischievous confusion which might be anticipated if they were to take strong hold of the national mind. The error of these men is, that they carry the conceptions of poetry into the unsuitable atmosphere of public life. Policy, with them, is not a matter of science, but of taste; and their opinions are selected according as they harmonize with fancy, not as they square with fact. They dream of a beautiful past which had no existence, unless on rare occasions and on a small scale, and would compel the

actual present into conformity with that unreal and shadowy vision.

Moreover, this erroneous notion of our deterioration has a further mischievous operation,—it puts us in a hurry. It generates the impression that there is no time to be lost; that evils are increasing upon us with such frightful rapidity that, if we do not act at once, action will come too late; that there is no space nor leisure for deliberation, for experiment, for caution. To speak colloquially, the public gets into a fuss. We act hastily, and therefore we act wrong.* In statesmanship, more than in any other branch of practical science, is the most patient and profound deliberation needed; for in none is a false step so difficult to be retraced; in none are its consequences so ramified, so far reaching, and so irreparable.

It is, therefore, our firm belief that our present, with all its gloomy shadows and its difficult enigmas, is yet, in the main, a marked improvement on the past; and that one of the surest signs and proofs of this, is our sensitiveness to, and our impatience under, those disorders and distresses which our ancestors either did not observe, or acquiesced in as normal, unavoidable, or unimportant. And it is with a profound conviction that our progress hitherto has been, on the whole, satisfactory, and that it depends only on ourselves to make our future advance far more rapid, steady, and illimitable, that we venture to point out a

* Lord Melbourne used to say that the only thing that thoroughly alarmed him was, to hear people say, "*Something must be done.*"

few of the mistakes which have rendered many of our efforts less fruitful of good than they might appear to have deserved. Zealous, energetic, indefatigable benevolence is extant in overflowing abundance. It needs only the guidance of sound principle to produce effects of which statesmen and philanthropists scarcely yet dare to dream.

The great difficulty is happily got over already. Our attention is fully awakened on the subject; our sympathies are almost nervously alive; our ears are eagerly open to any suggestions even from the most incapable and inexperienced; for both our fears and our humanity are effectually aroused.

But unfortunately, though an eminently humane, we are not in general a philosophic, nor a systematic people. In this respect we and our neighbours the French are at the opposite poles of the intellectual world. Their minds are scientific and mathematical to a fault; ours are practical and empiric to a fault. They are for ever recurring to first principles on the most trivial occasions; we eschew all reference to such, even in the most momentous matters, with a shrinking instinct which partakes of conscious incapacity. In the common arrangements of their household or their family—in the conduct of the most paltry cases in their courts of law,—in the formation or amendment of their constitutions,—the French proceed by line and square, to a degree which appears to an Englishman to savour both of the pedant and the schoolboy. They love to have everything *in seipso totus, teres, atque*

rotundus. In all discussions upon social questions the Frenchman starts from the "laws of nature" and the "rights of man." The Englishman seldom goes further back than the precedents which his own history can furnish him. He is afraid to adopt the most valuable and incontestable improvement unless he can find some warrant for it in the past; and the surest way of inducing him to go forward, is to persuade him that he is going backward. The French commence their national ameliorations *ab initio,* and upon principle; we attack our social maladies zealously indeed, but singly and empirically, not scientifically. We dread all systematic steps; we mistrust everything that proceeds upon, or seems to confirm, a theory. We are not only satisfied with, but actually partial to patchwork; and are for ever putting a new piece into an old garment. Of two extremes this is unquestionably the safest and the best: but still it is an extreme, and therefore an error. We attack each evil as it arises, or rather as it first strikes our view, as if it stood single and isolated, without reference either to its causes or its context. We seldom dream of tracing back, as we easily might do, a host of social mischiefs to one common source or seed, and then, by removing that, leave the manifold consequences to die out for want of nourishment. The plan we adopt is the idle, shallow, and wasteful proceeding of cutting off each head of the ever-growing hydra, as it appears. Hence the voluminous, confused, and contradictory character of much of our remedial legislation. We

have ten edicts where one would have sufficed; we have many that are inconsistent with each other, and many that aggravate the virulence, while they suppress or vary the symptoms, of the disease.

The particular tendency to error apparent in the prevalent social philosophy of the day, to which we wish to direct special attention, lies in the unsound, exaggerated, and somewhat maudlin tenderness with which it is now the fashion to regard the criminal and the pauper. This feeling is in itself so amiable, so Christian (on a superficial glance at least), and has so much of justice and rectitude for its foundation, that not only has it a natural aptitude to degenerate into excess, but we are disposed to regard the excess itself as a virtue, and are therefore little likely to guard against it. Selfishness is so instinctively felt to be the besetting sin,—"the epidemic malady of human nature"—that it is peculiarly difficult to persuade ourselves that we can ever be acting wrong when we know that we are acting unselfishly. And gentleness to the errors, and compassion towards the sufferings of others, are such adorning excellences in the individual, and in domestic life, that we listen with impatience and mistrust to the moralist, who would teach us that these sentiments, when carried into public affairs, and systematised in legislation, may often become eminently mischievous, and therefore highly culpable. Yet it is unquestionable that, though individuals may *occasionally* allow charity and compassion to guide them without going ruinously astray, yet the State, if it wishes

to maintain a straight and safe career, must act upon principles as stern, as steady, and as comprehensive as those of Nature herself. And while, with pardonable pride and self-gratulation, we contrast the prying and impatient humanity of the present day, with the hard and brutal indifference which characterised a former age, we are prone to forget, or to ignore, how much of selfish tenderness to our own feelings may lurk in this morbid and pampered sensitiveness to the inevitable or the medicinal wretchedness of those around us.

"It is pleasing to reflect," says Mr. Macaulay (vol. i. p. 424.), "that the public mind of England has softened while it has ripened; and that we have, in the course of ages, become not only a wiser, but also a kinder, people. There is scarcely a page of the history or lighter literature of the seventeenth century which does not contain some proof that our ancestors were less humane than their posterity. The discipline of workshops, of schools, of private families, though not more efficient than at present, was infinitely harsher. Masters, well born and bred, were in the habit of beating their servants. Pedagogues knew no way of imparting knowledge but by beating their pupils. Husbands, of decent station, were not ashamed to beat their wives. The implacability of hostile factions was such as we can scarcely conceive. Whigs were disposed to murmur, because Stafford was suffered to die without seeing his bowels burned before his face. Tories reviled and insulted Russell, as his coach passed from the Tower to the scaffold, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. As

little mercy was shown by the populace to sufferers of a humbler rank. If an offender was put in the pillory, it was well if he escaped with life from the shower of brickbats and paving stones. If he was tied to the cart's tail, the crowd pressed round him, imploring the hangman to give it the fellow well, and make him howl. Gentlemen arranged parties of pleasure to Bridewell on Court days, for the purpose of seeing the wretched women who beat hemp there whipped. A man pressed to death for refusing to plead, a woman burned for coining, excited less sympathy than is now felt for a galled horse, or an overdriven ox. Fights, compared with which a boxing match is a refined and humane spectacle, were among the favourite diversions of a large part of the town. Multitudes assembled to see gladiators hack each other to pieces with deadly weapons, and shouted with delight when one of the combatants lost a finger or an eye. The prisons were hells on earth, seminaries of every crime, and of every disease. At the assizes, the lean and yellow culprits brought with them from their cells to the dock an atmosphere of stench and pestilence, which sometimes avenged them signally on bench, bar, and jury. But on all this misery society looked with profound indifference. Nowhere could be found that restless and sensitive compassion which has, in our time, extended a powerful protection to the factory child, to the Hindoo widow, to the negro slave—which pries into the stores and water-casks of every emigrant ship, which winces at every lash laid on the back of a

drunken soldier, which will not suffer the thief in the hulks to be ill-fed or overworked, and which has repeatedly endeavoured to save the life even of the murderer. It is true that compassion ought, like all other feelings, to be under the government of reason; and has, for want of such government, produced some ridiculous and some deplorable effects."

This sensitive aversion to the infliction or the sight of pain is, in truth, the characteristic and the especial peril of the practical social philosophy of the day. There is a general disposition to regard all the wretched as simply *unfortunate;* to shrink at once from *the infliction* of the punishment which the law assigns to crime, and from *the spectacle* of the punishment which nature has allotted to idleness, imprudence, and excess. This is an amiable extreme, undoubtedly, but still an extreme to be avoided: and not the less dangerous for the gentle aspect it puts on. Let us set aside for the present our treatment of criminals, and devote a few pages to the consideration of the errors in the prevalent views of pauperism.

The original idea of a Poor-law was, an arrangement to compel idlers and vagrants to work: the modern form which the conception has assumed, is a machine to support them out of the earnings of those who do work. The three wants of man—the only wants which strictly deserve the name of necessaries—the only wants indispensable enough to a tolerable existence to scourge the indolent from sloth, to rouse the stupid to vivacious toil, or to stimulate the savage to

those exertions which gradually lead him on to civilization,—are food, shelter, and clothing. The Poor-law, according to the popular view of it, is an arrangement for supplying these gratis, to all whom want of industry, want of capacity, or want of forethought has left destitute of them. It is a contrivance for relieving every one, as soon as his privations reach the point of actual want of any of those requirements, want of which is the original stimulus to all exertion. It tacitly assumes, as its axiomatic foundation, that the idle *have a right* to share the earnings of the industrious, *provided only that their idleness shall have brought them to destitution.* It lays down a principle which, logically reasoned out, is socialism; and which, legitimately and consistently followed out in practice, would speedily work its own cure, by the manifestation of its intolerable and fatal consequences. In England we are slow to perceive the error of our theoretic views—because national good sense, and national good feeling, generally interpose to prevent them from being carried out to those extremes of practice which would demonstrate their unsoundness even to the dullest intelligence.

We say that the principle of our Poor-Law sanctions the appropriation of the earnings of the industrious to the maintenance of the idle. For we must never lose sight of the momentous truth,—which, in fact, lies at the foundation of the sacredness with which property is regarded both by the common law and the common feeling of mankind,—*that all property is*, in some form or other, actually or virtually, in the immediate,

or in the remote past, *the result of industry and saving.* It is, in short, the produce of two great social virtues: the virtue of exertion in the first instance, and the virtue of self-denial in the second. Take away those cases—rare in this country at least—in which property has been either seized by the strong arm of power or appropriated by fraud, and transmitted to the lineal descendants of the original despoilers, and the assertion admits of no dispute, and no exception. The present possessors may, in many cases be drones; but they have inherited from the bees. The actual owner of a vast estate may be a dissolute and worthless spendthrift, and may squander his existence and his property at Paris or Vienna; but he inherited from an ancestor who earned it in the service of the commonwealth, in the army, or at the bar. The princely estates of the present Lord Eldon, the Duke of Marlborough, or the Duke of Wellington, are, surely, as truly the produce of honourable industry and worthy services, as the accumulations of the merchant, or the hoardings of the peasant. And, in like manner, the wealth of the great manufacturer, the successful lawyer, or the ennobled banker, is the meed, either in the existing or the bequeathing generation, of toils and sacrifices which any intelligent husbandman or handicraftsman would admit to constitute a valid title.

But, in truth, it is not only those massive properties that we assume the right of mulcting for the support of the pauper. The smallest *realised* savings of the

energetic and frugal artisan are tithed by the parish overseer, for the maintenance of the destitute, the indolent, and the drunken. Let us look at a few cases, not only of real but of daily occurrence. A knife-grinder, at Sheffield, with better education, better feeling, or better sense than his fellows, resolves that he will employ the high wages which his trade affords him, to raise himself in the social scale. He works steadily six days in the week, denies himself all the luxuries and wasteful recreations in which most of his brother workmen indulge, and, at the end of a few years, is able, by unremitting diligence and unflinching self-denial, to purchase the cottage that he lived in, and to add to it a few acres of land. The overseer immediately claims from him three shillings in the pound,—for the support of a man who worked in the same shop with himself, who earned a guinea a-day, but who was always drunk four days in the week, and who is, of course, now on the parish! The cotton-spinner, or warehouseman, of Bolton or Manchester, who earns much, spends little, and abstains from marrying till he has invested a sufficiency in some fixed security, is rewarded for years of frugality and toil, by having to pay towards the support of the wife and children of the weaver who married at twenty, and deserted his family at thirty. It is folly to suppose that he does not feel bitterly the injustice of such a claim. The mechanic, who, in good times, laid by a fund to maintain him when work should be scarce and wages low, and denied himself many comforts in

order to do so, finds his fellow-mechanic, who exercised no such prudence, and refused himself no indulgence, supported by parochial funds to which *he* contributed; and he feels what a sad and mocking comment this is upon the exhortations to economy and forethought he so often hears. Two men, both able artisans, start with the same advantages, in the same trade—each earning thirty shillings a-week. The one is steady, industrious, and frugal, lives long single, improves his mind, lays by two-thirds of what he earns, and accumulates property rapidly. The other marries at twenty, spends all his income, drinks occasionally, is disabled by sickness, or loses his place by imprudence and irregularity. At thirty-five years of age, *the one is paying parochial rates—the other is receiving parochial aid.* These contrasts are very frequent; the result of them is very demoralising; and the principle which upholds them clearly indefensible.

The Poor-law, as at present constituted, has a noxious operation of another sort. It has an irresistible tendency to vitiate the very essence and beauty of that Christian humanity whose functions it usurps, by degrading charity from a voluntary gift to a legal obligation. Charity is no longer a willing contribution from the affluent and able to the wants of the needy and infirm; it is a socialistic mulcting of the rich or independent, for the benefit of the poor,—a communistic decimation of the savings of the industrious for the maintenance of the idle. The Poor-law asserts, in its nakedest and broadest form, the doctrine of M.

Proudhon and Louis Blanc,—that want is, *in itself*, a claim,—that those who have nothing, possess, *in virtue of that very destitution*, a full title to the property of others. It poisons the very fountain of Christian charity, by making it an indefeasible *right* on the one side, and an inescapable tax on the other. The man who knows that the law enables him to *demand* a portion of the income of his more fortunate or more industrious fellow-citizen, is not likely to be shy in asking; or grateful in receiving, the niggard and reluctant boon. And the man who has a tenth of his income forcibly taken from him, to relieve a poverty which, from the mode of its bestowal, it helps to foster and create, will generally be both unable and unwilling to bestow another tenth in assisting those cases which deserve, and would otherwise have aroused his ready and active sympathy.

The Poor-law, according to the modern theory of it, is, in principle, a virtual abrogation of natural laws. It interposes between the cause and its consequence. The laws of Nature—which are the ordinances of Providence, and therefore the embodiment of unerring wisdom—have decreed that idleness and improvidence shall incur destitution: we assume to ourselves a dispensing power, and pronounce that they shall *not* incur destitution!

But, it will be answered, and with great truth, idleness is not the only cause of destitution: many are destitute who are willing and anxious to work. Under all circumstances, casualties will often superinduce

destitution. Men in the prime of life are stricken with sudden incapacity; the premature death of an industrious and thriving workman will often leave his family with no provision against want; fluctuations in fashion, changes in the channels of trade, which no prudence could have foreseen, will often reduce hundreds to poverty. More especially is this the case under our complicated system of society, teeming as it is with anomalies and difficulties which have descended to us from our forefathers, entailed upon us by their errors, and aggravated by our own clumsy or selfish legislation. Many of the burdens under which the labourer sinks, many of the impediments to the success of the industrious, many of the checks which make it difficult for the artisan to find employment, are of our own or our ancestors' creation. Destitution is not always avoidable, even by the energetic and the well-conducted. Society, therefore, which may have caused the mischief, must not call upon the individual sufferer to bear its unmitigated pressure.

We admit the plea; and we admit it, the more readily, because it leads us straight to the heart and marrow of the question. For, while admitting the propriety of a provision for the destitute in some form or other, under actual existing circumstances, we deny *in toto* the abstract right of the poor to assistance from the funds of others, *as a claim*. A provision for the destitute, on our view of the matter, is not a duty which, as a general proposition, society owes to its poorer members, but a debt that a *society which has*

uronged its poorer members owes them as compensation and amends.

We cannot conceive on what other rational basis the poor can have a *claim* upon the possessions of the rich, or the idle on the earnings of the industrious. The poor man, like the rich man, has a right to the produce of his industry, and to his realised property (which is the produce of *his* industry, or of the industry of some one who has bestowed it upon him);—he has a right, like every other member of society, to what he *possesses* and to what he *earns*, but to nothing more. The naked demand of the poor to share the wealth of the rich is, as we have said before, simple, undisguised communism. The demand of the labourer for employment—his notion that he has *a right to have work found for him*, and that, if he is willing to work, he is entitled to be fed—is, when submitted to the test of reason, a clear absurdity. If the Devonshire ploughman has a right to a customer for his ploughing, or the Sheffield mechanic for his scissors, the manufacturer must have an equal right to a customer for his cloth, and the poet for his verses; the farmer to a remunerating purchaser for his corn, the lawyer to his brief, and the clergyman to his cure. How many diligent and hungry barristers are at least as anxious after employment as the peasant or the artisan? But do they ever commit the folly of demanding it as a right? of insisting that a client shall go to law in order that they may gain a living by conducting his case? or even of requiring their over-

worked brethren to give them a portion of their labour and their fees? How many hundreds of Manchester cotton-spinners or Leeds clothiers have their warehouses crammed with goods, which they desire only to sell at the most paltry profit, or often even at prime cost? But do they ever stultify themselves by requiring the state to compel unwilling customers to purchase from them articles which they do not want? And is the day-labourer at all more rational in demanding work from a farmer who does not need his services, and has already as many hands as he can profitably employ? To compel the employer to use and pay for labour *which he does not want—i. e.* to give wages against his will—is obviously the same injustice and the same oppression, as to compel the labourer to sell his labour against his will—to work for an employer when he would prefer to be idle, or thinks he can dispose of his exertions to greater advantage elsewhere. In the one case you forcibly seize upon a man's money, in the other case upon his toil; in both cases you are guilty of the robbery of obliging a man to part with his property against his will, and without an adequate equivalent.

Let us look this matter, then, honestly and boldly in the face, and no longer allow ourselves to be deluded by words which have no corresponding ideas attached to them. Labour, like corn, calico, or broadcloth, is a *commodity* which, like any other commodity, will follow the usual laws of supply and demand—will find purchasers when it is wanted, and in the quantity in

which it is wanted; and to compel people to purchase it who do not want it is as patent a tyranny, and to ask for this compulsion is as blind a selfishness, in the case of this commodity, as in the case of any other. The only circumstance which can complicate the question, the only circumstance which can cloud the crystal clearness or invalidate the irrefragable soundness of the conclusion, occurs when *either the supply of labour has been artificially increased, or the demand for it artificially diminished.* Such artificial interference the interferers may be justly called upon to compensate, to counteract, or to undo. In this nutshell, to our apprehension, lies the whole question of a Poor-law.

We shall be much aided in arriving at a clear view of the merits of the case by a very simple subdivision. There are *three classes* of destitute (*i.e.* of those poor who need aid in order to enable them to live)—first, those whom society has made destitute by selfish or injudicious legislation, by sins of commission, or by sins of neglect; secondly, those who have become destitute through their own fault or that of their parents; and, thirdly, those who have become destitute through unavoidable casualty, through calamities which could not reasonably have been anticipated—by the "visitation of God," as we say. Each of these classes requires a special and appropriate treatment, whereas both public law and public feeling at present lump them together, and deal with them as a homogeneous mass.

I. And, first, as to those of whose destitution society must bear the blame. Towards these unhappy indi-

viduals the duty of society is clear. It must redeem the past neglect, correct the past mistakes, unmake, in short, or efface the class as speedily as possible, and assist to support it till effaced.

There are three ways in which society may promote and create destitution—by absorbing in taxation an undue proportion of the produce of industry, by undue encouragement to population, thereby augmenting the supply of labour, and by improper restrictions on trade and industry, thereby diminishing the demand for labour. It is impossible to deny that in England we have been guilty of all these injustices. But it is equally certain that we have retraced our steps, and that we now offend in these ways no longer. In the first of these errors the poor were necessarily passive, and therefore innocent; in the two others they must share with the State the blame and the penalty, since, however injudicious or restrictive be the policy of the government, it is always in the power of the people themselves to insure a due remuneration for their labour by restricting the supply to the demand—by refusing, in spite of encouragement, to increase the population beyond those numbers, whom industry and enterprise can employ at remunerative wages.

This amount of good sense and self-denial, however, we have perhaps scarcely a right at present to require from them, when we remember how deplorably the spread of sound education among them has been retarded by our miserable sectarian animosities,—how little has been done to teach them those elementary

economic laws, on the sedulous observance of which their worldly welfare depends,—how much is still done in an opposite direction in many parishes, by farmers and poor-law guardians to favour the married at the expense of the single,—how many of our provincial clergy and philanthropists, and how preponderating a proportion of the periodical press, are occupied, even at this day, in preaching up slavish dependence upon charity, and in crying down the virtues of providence and self-reliance, with a mingled recklessness and fanaticism which deserves the strongest reprobation. This, however, must be left to the natural correctives of time and circumstance. Now that the State has unfettered industry, and removed all unfair and oppressive taxation from the poor, all that justice can further claim from it is, that it shall, in the most judicious way that can be suggested, maintain those who really can find no employment, till, in the progress of prosperity, a period arrives (which, to judge by the rapidity with which our national resources are developed, cannot be far distant) when the demand for labour shall have overtaken the supply; and then to announce, that for the future the fate of all must depend on their own foresight, and their own exertions.*

II. The second class is by far the most numerous; and it is in dealing with this class, that the radical error of our social philosophy is most apparent and most in-

* Alas! this period has arrived—and passed. The golden opportunity has come to us—more than once perhaps; and no class and no statesman has been found to use it.

jurious. The idle, the dissolute, the dawdling,—the Irish peasant, who will beg for a penny rather than work for a shilling;—the Irish fisherman, who burns his boats for firewood, and pawns his nets, instead of using them to fish with;—the agricultural labourer, who waits listlessly in his hovel till work finds him out, instead of diligently setting out to seek it in every direction for himself, and who remains a burden on his parish, when manufacturing enterprise in the next town is hampered and delayed for want of hands;—the Sheffield grinder, who being able to earn a guinea a-day, will only work two days in the week, and drinks the other five;—the spinners and weavers in manufacturing towns, who waste hundreds of thousands of pounds in *strikes* for higher wages, which always end in the impoverishment of both themselves and their employers, and in leaving numbers of them permanently unprovided;—the unionists, who, like the weavers of Norwich, the shipbuilders and sawyers of Dublin, and the lace-makers of Nottingham, have, by violence and unreasonable demands, driven away trade from their respective localities;—and, finally, the thousands who, in spite of exhortation, in spite of the bitter warnings of experience, persist in spending every week the last farthing of their earnings, as if prosperity, and youth, and health could always last:—all these are the laborious architects of their own ill fortune—all these are destitute by their own act, their own folly, their own guilt. Those parents, again, who marry with no means of bringing up a family, with no provision for the future,

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no sure and ample support even for the present;—those who (like a hand-loom weaver whom we knew) bring up eleven children to an overstocked and expiring trade, which, even to themselves, affords only insufficient earnings and unsteady employment;—and those who spend in wastefulness and drinking wages which, carefully husbanded, might secure a future maintenance for their offspring;—these all bring into the world paupers, who are destitute by their parents' culpability, and the sins of the father are visited upon the children.

Now, with regard to these classes, whatever aid the sentiments of Christian charity may prompt us, as individuals, and in each individual case, to administer, or however it may be occasionally necessary for the state to interpose for the actual salvation of *life*, it is important to pronounce distinctly that, on no principle of social right or justice, have they any claim to share the earnings or the savings of their more prudent, more energetic, more self-denying fellow citizens. They have made for themselves the hard bed they lie on. They have sinned against the plainest laws of nature, and must be left to the corrective which nature has "in that case made and provided;"—a corrective which is certain to operate in the end, if only we do not step in to counteract it by regulations dictated by plausible and pardonable, but shallow and short-sighted humanity. But let us not lose sight of the indubitable truth, that *if we stand between the error and its consequence, we stand between the evil and its cure*,—if we intercept the penalty we perpetuate the sin.

Nor can it be said that, in contending that improvidence, idleness, dissipation, and early marriages should be allowed to encounter their natural fruit and salutary punishment among the poor, we are guilty of any partiality or special harshness. We demand no more from them than from all other classes. Privation and wretchedness are the allotted consequences and correctives of these vices in all other ranks,—why should the lowest be exempted from the common law? Why should we enact that the poor alone should be idle and imprudent, yet never come to want?—should be reckless and wasteful, and yet be fed at the cost of the sober and the frugal?—why should they alone be allowed to marry without the smallest actual or prospective provision for a family, yet be guaranteed that their children shall never sink into lower poverty than themselves?

Let us not be misrepresented. We are not contending that the poor should not marry, because they are already too numerous for the labour market to draft off. We contend only that the poor, like nearly all the middle classes—like the majority even of the higher classes—should not marry—have no right to marry—till they have made some provision for the maintenance of the expected family. Marriage is an enjoyment, the claim to possess which must, in every rank, be purchased by previous industry, economy, and prudence. No respectable shop-keeper, no merchant's son, no educated lawyer, no younger branch of an aristocratic family, thinks of marrying till he can support a wife in decency and comfort. If he does, his whole life is probably one

long penalty—one drear repentance. Thousands accordingly remain unmarried through life, from inability to procure the means which alone would make marriage justifiable. Is it right to call upon such to support those who have spurned at all similar feelings of justice and self-restraint? Can any reason be assigned for making a distinction between the classes—for imposing this restraint upon the rich, and exonerating the poor?

"'Every one has a right to live.' We will suppose this granted," says Mr Mill (*Pol. Econ.*, vol. VI. p. 428). "But no one has a right to bring creatures into life to be supported by other people. Whoever means to stand upon the first of these rights must renounce all pretensions to the last. If a man cannot support even himself unless others help him, those others are entitled to say that they do not also undertake the support of all the offspring which it is physically possible for him to summon into the world. Yet there are abundance of writers and public speakers, including many of most ostentatious pretensions to high feelings, whose views of life are so truly brutish, that they see hardship in preventing paupers from breeding hereditary paupers in the very workhouse itself! Posterity will one day ask, with astonishment, what sort of people it could be among whom such preachers could find proselytes.

"It is conceivable that the state might guarantee [redacted]ployment at ample wages to all who are born. But [redacted] does this, it is bound, in self-protection, and for [redacted]ake of every purpose for which government exists, [redacted]ovide that no person shall be born without its

consent. If the ordinary and natural motives to self-restraint are removed, others must be substituted. Restrictions on marriage, at least equivalent to those existing in some of the German states, *or severe penalties* on those who have children when unable to support them, would then be indispensable. Society may feed the necessitous, if it takes their multiplication under its control; or it may leave the last to their discretion, if it abandons the first to their own care. But it cannot take half of the one course and half of the other. Let it choose that which circumstances or the public sentiment renders most expedient. But it cannot with impunity take the feeding on itself, and leave the multiplying free."

III. If the two first classes of destitute persons were dealt with on sound principles,—the first by removing the causes which have induced or which partially excuse their destitution; and assisting them till time shall have effaced them, or till national prosperity shall have absorbed them;—the second, by allowing the natural consequences of their folly to arouse them to prudence and exertion, aided only by such *uncertain* yet liberal succour as private benevolence will always be ready to afford to the struggling and the sober,—*the third* class, the destitute by casualty, will be found reduced to a very narrow and manageable compass. Such destitution from accident or unavoidable misfortune is not unfrequent in any class: even in the middle ranks, in proportion to their numbers, such afflictions are probably as frequent as in the lowest. Those whom

Mr Wakefield ingeniously designates as "the uneasy classes," contribute largely to it. The skilled artisan, in receipt of high wages, in constant employment, possessed of moderate savings, whose circumstances and prospects might have seemed to justify him in marrying; but who is cut off in the prime of life by inevitable accident, or disabled by uninduced disease, leaves his wife and family among the destitute by casualty. The naval or military man, debarred by illness from all chance of advancing in his profession, or whose prospects are ruined by the death of an influential relative, may be classed under the same category. The merchant, who has been reduced from affluence by the roguery or the bankruptcy of others; the single ladies, whose income has been secured on turnpike trusts or West India estates; the clergyman, whose professional career has, from any unforeseen occurrence, been suddenly closed—may all be considered to belong to the same classification. This class—the destitute who have fallen from a higher fortune, not by their own fault, but by the visitation of God—furnish accordingly the highest and the best field for the exercise of Christian charity—for the display of that active, restless, indefatigable, benevolence, which is the proud characteristic of our age and country; and which (were all less valid and legitimate claims upon it negatived and put aside by the operation of the principles we have advocated) would not only amply suffice to meet all such demands, but would, by being confined within its proper channel, and directed to its fit recipients, rapidly recover all its readiness,

all its beauty, all its reflex action on the donor. The man who is compelled to contribute a large portion of his income to the support and encouragement of idleness and self-indulgence, is both less able and less willing to relieve more deserving cases of distress, and becomes more surly and suspicious with regard to all such cases. The application of sound and unwavering principles to the two first classes would ensure the more complete and effective relief of the third. The destitution of the former would soon be effaced by the natural operation of unchecked economic laws;—while the destitution of the latter would be relieved as rapidly as it appeared, by that individual kindliness which nature and Christianity have alike allotted as its cure.

Our philosophy will by many be termed stern and harsh; but if it be sound, there can be no question that it is the truest and the tenderest mercy. That physician shows the most genuine sympathy with the patient who resolutely adopts the treatment which will soonest and most effectually eradicate his malady: and that assuredly is the truest philanthropy which exerts itself, not to relieve suffering, but to prevent it;—that the truest and most high-minded charity which labours assiduously to render its recipients independent of itself. It is not only a false philosophy, but a spurious benevolence, which would blink the difficulties of our social problems—which would slur them over rather than solve them—which would seek for peace in fallacies and compromises whence peace can never spring—which would shrink from the truth because

the truth seems to be severe—which would tacitly persuade the poor that they may with impunity violate natural and economic laws, and that they can sow the seeds of improvidence, indolence, and waste, without reaping the appointed harvest of squalid wretchedness and moral degradation—which encourages them to marry without means, because it seems harsh to prohibit or postpone the great solace of life to those who have so few others, "—as if (says Mr. Mill) it were not a thousand times more hard-hearted to tell human beings that they may, than that they may not, call into existence swarms of other creatures, who are sure to be miserable, and most likely to be depraved." We had proof enough under the Old Poor-law of the immense aggravation of pauperism and degradation caused by our morbid softness and our false philosophy. We have had proof enough since, in Ireland as well as here, that we cannot operate *ab extra*;—we cannot raise the mass out of their misery—they must raise themselves. State interference is omnipotent for evil—very impotent for good; powerful to make and multiply paupers—very powerless to relieve them. Our duty consists in encouraging the exertions of the people, in removing every obstacle, and affording every facility. More than this, in reality, *we cannot do:* and if they are once convinced that this is our doctrine, and that it will be unswervingly applied;—that, while no grievance and no impediment shall remain which legislation can remove, yet that the state will no longer, in their behalf, stand between the cause and its consequence—

will no longer exonerate the poor from the obligation of those virtues by which almost alone in all other classes comfort and respectability can be purchased—we may hope soon to see a mighty change, in a society otherwise so vigorous as ours—a change, the nature and extent of which will amaze those who, from having always let down their net at the wrong side of the boat, have toiled through the night of years, and yet taken nothing.

In dealing with these matters, however, we must again most distinctly and anxiously announce, that we do not urge—we deprecate—any barbarous or indecent haste. All that we are now anxious for is, to superinduce a healthier tone of public feeling on the subject than at present prevails. Let us once arrive at a sound view of things; and, even if we put this view in practice timidly, languidly, tardily, and partially, the "war with evil" is already half accomplished. Let us set and keep our face in the right direction, and the slowness of our progress need then be a matter of comparatively slight regret. We have hitherto erred in our view and our treatment of social maladies, from neglecting to study Nature (by which we mean always the Author of Nature) in her mode of dealing with them. We have been habitually too tender and too hasty. We have wanted nerve, and we have wanted patience. We have forgotten to observe that Nature cures the sins and follies of man by means of the penalties which she attaches to them, as at once their consequence and their corrective. Our tenderness has

shrunk from the infliction or the permission of the penalty—and we have wondered that the cure has not been wrought! Evils, such as those inveterate and deeply-rooted ones that now pervade our social system, cannot be removed without long time and much suffering;—it is, therefore, no argument against a plan of cure that it works slowly, and works "through much tribulation." Awakened reflection will show that Nature, in working *her* cures, is impatient of no needful slowness, and appalled at no needful suffering: And we must learn our course by watching hers. We must first satisfy ourselves that we are *on the right tack:* and then urge on the process with unshaken nerves, and await the final result with untiring patience and unfaltering trust.

1849.

MARY BARTON.*

"MARY BARTON" is a work of higher pretensions than an ordinary novel. It aims not only at the delineation of the joys and sorrows, the loves and hatreds of our common humanity, but it professes also to give a picture of the feelings, habits, opinions, character and social condition of a particular class of the people,—a class, too, which has of late years attracted a great share of public attention, and has probably been the subject of more misconception and misrepresentation than has fallen to the lot of any other.

The scene of the story is laid in Manchester; the time selected is the period of severe manufacturing distress which occurred about the year 1842; and the *dramatis personæ* belong almost exclusively to the factory population. The outline is briefly as follows:—John Barton,—a factory operative of considerable, but no way remarkable intelligence, of a sensitive and affectionate, but moody and unchastened temper, a zealous member of Trades' Unions, and a diligent reader of the "Northern Star,"—having lost two children during a previous period of distress, and being now deprived of his wife, who died in child-birth, becomes at length quite soured by calamity. By constantly

* *Mary Barton; a Tale of Manchester Life.* London: 1848.

dwelling on his own sorrows and on the privations and sufferings around him, he grows morose, passionate, and vindictive; and ends by the deliberate assassination, during a strike for wages, of one of the master manufacturers,—a young man of kind heart, but of somewhat supercilious manners; of whose only real offence against him—an attempt to seduce his daughter—John Barton is, and remains, wholly ignorant. This is the main plot; the interest of the tale is varied, and very efficiently, in the person of James Wilson, a young mechanic of the better order, and devoted lover of the heroine, Mary Barton. Suspicious circumstances having led to his trial for the murder which her father had committed, he is acquitted at the last moment, mainly through her exertions. Several other characters are introduced of singular beauty and reality; Alice, an excellent and simple-hearted old woman who goes about doing good,—old Job Legh, a poor and self-taught naturalist, and his daughter Margaret, whose loss of her sight is compensated by the seasonable discovery of her talent as a singer,— and the uneducated and querulous, but affectionate Mrs. Wilson,—every one of them belonging to the same rank in life. Indeed all the personages of the story, with the exception of Mr. Carson, the mill-owner, and his unfortunate son, are taken from the strictly artisan class.

This meagre sketch will perhaps enable those few of our readers who have not also been readers of the book itself, to form some conception of the construction of the story, and to understand our extracts. The lite-

rary merit of the work is in some respects of a very high order. Its interest is intense; often painfully so: indeed it is here, we think, that the charm of the book and the triumph of the author will chiefly be found. Its pictures and reflections are, however, also full of those touches of nature which "make the whole world kin;" and its dialogues are managed with a degree of ease and naturalness rarely attained even by the most experienced writers of fiction. We believe that they approach very nearly, both in tone and style, to the conversations actually carried on in the dingy cottages of Lancashire. The authoress—for "Mary Barton" is understood to be, and indeed very palpably is, the production of a lady—must not be confounded with those writers who engage with a particular subject, because it presents a vein which they imagine may be successfully worked—get up the needful information, and then prepare a story as a solicitor might prepare a case. She has evidently lived much among the people she describes, made herself intimate at their firesides, and feels a sincere, though sometimes too exclusive and undiscriminating, sympathy with them. In short, her work has been clearly a "labour of love," and has been written with a most earnest and benevolent purpose. It is a production of great excellence, and of still greater promise.

But it must also be regarded in a more serious point of view. It comes before us professing to be a faithful picture of a little known, though most energetic and important, class of the community; and it has the noble

ambition of doing real good by creating sympathy, by diffusing information, and removing prejudices. To its pretensions in these respects, we regret that we cannot extend an unqualified approbation. With all the truthfulness displayed in the delineation of individual scenes, the general impression left by the book, on those who read it as mere passive recipients, will be imperfect, partial, and erroneous. Notwithstanding the good sense and good-feeling with which it abounds, it is calculated, we fear, in many places, to mislead the minds and confirm and exasperate the prejudices, of the general public on the one hand, and of the factory operatives on the other. Were "Mary Barton" to be only read by Manchester men and master manufacturers, it could scarcely fail to be serviceable; because they might profit by its suggestions, and would at once detect its exaggerations and mistakes. But considering the extraordinary delusions of many throughout the south of England respecting the great employers of labour in the north and west; as well as the ignorance and misconception of their true interests and position, which are still too common among the artisans of many of our large towns,—the effect of the work, if taken without some corrective, might, in these quarters, be mischievous in the extreme. And this must be our apology for pointing out, in some detail, both the false philosophy and the inaccurate descriptions which detract so seriously from the value of these most interesting volumes.

But first we must indulge ourselves in the more pleasing task of noticing the beauty and fidelity with

which the authoress seizes on and depicts those bright redeeming features which still characterise our operative population; and in which we recognise with pride, not only some of the highest and most difficult attainments of virtue, but "germs of almost impossible good,"—signs and elements of progress towards a social and moral eminence, distant yet, and very lofty, but nevertheless within their reach. First among these must be reckoned what Monckton Milnes so justly calls "the sacred Patience of the poor." The extent to which this virtue prevails can be only appreciated by those who have mixed intimately with the working classes. It is a spectacle fitted to amaze and shame the more favoured children of fortune. Distress they submit to without surprise, and generally without murmur, as one of the appointed incidents to their lot. They are often very deficient, it is true, in the foresight and self-denial which might provide against the recurrence of privation; but, when it comes, they meet it with a cheerful, manly, simple resignation, accepting

> "Each ill
> As a plain fact whose right or wrong
> They question not, confiding still
> That it shall last not overlong;
> Willing, from first to last, to take
> The mysteries of our life as given,
> Leaving the time-worn soul to slake
> Its thirst in an undoubted Heaven."

Feelings of envy, against individuals or classes enjoying an apparent exemption from the privations with which they are overwhelmed, or of indignation at any

supposed want of compassion on the part of those blessed with a happier lot—natural and probable as such would seem to be—we believe in fact to be rare, partial, and transient among the labouring people. Men there are, and will be in every class, of unhappy, selfish tempers, prone to dwell on painful comparisons, and to embitter their own condition by every contrast they can gather round it. But these are so far from being types of the poor in general, that they are found more sparingly among the poor than in any other rank of life. We have watched the operatives of our populous towns during several periods of severe suffering, and (except from a few such ill-conditioned characters as we have just referred to) we scarcely remember to have heard an expression of angry envy or malignity. There has been many a lament, scarcely ever a curse; many a countenance clouded by care, rarely a face of petulant impatience; the predominant characteristic has always been a submissive hopefulness, often an almost stoical endurance, and as soon as times mended, there has been generally even too speedy a forgetfulness of past troubles.*

* This was written a quarter of a century ago. I could not write so now. There has been, in the interim, some intellectual advance in some quarters and on some topics, chiefly political, and due to Parliamentary speakers;—little or no increase in knowledge of political economy; grievous deterioration in good feeling—both of which I attribute deliberately and chiefly to the noxious influence of trades' unions and their leading agitators; an immense and general advance in wages and power of improvement among the artisan classes, along with (it is deplorable to have to say it) next to no improvement in their social comforts, little in their habits of saving, and the opposite of improvement in the matter of sobriety.

This admirable feature in the artisan character, the authoress of "Mary Barton" has discovered and delineated in the cases of George Wilson and Old Alice; though, from the circumstance of the discontented man, John Barton, being the more prominent person, the erroneous impression would be conveyed to the reader, that patience is the exception, and ill-humour and vindictiveness the rule,—especially among the stronger and more thoughtful natures. The following is a conversation between the two friends, Wilson and Barton, by the bedside of one of their destitute and dying comrades:—

"'Han you known this chap long?' asked Barton.

"'Better nor three year. He's worked with Carsons that long, and were always a steady, civil spoken fellow, though, as I said afore, somewhat of a Methodee. I wish I'd gotten a letter he sent his missis a week or two agone, when he were on tramp for work. It did my heart good to read it; for you see, I were a bit grumbling myself; it seemed hard to be spunging on Jem (his son), and taking a' his flesh-meat money to buy bread for me and them as I ought to be keeping. But you know, though I can earn nought, I mun eat summut. Well, as I telled ye, I were grumbling, when she (indicating the sleeping woman by a nod) brought me Ben's letter, for she could na read hersel. It were as good as Bible words; ne'er a word o' repining; a' about God being our father, and that we mun bear patiently whate'er He sends.'

"'Don ye think He's the master's father too? I'd be loath to have them for brothers.'

"'Eh, John; donna talk so; sure there's many and many a master as good or better nor us.'

"'If you think so, tell me this. How comes it they're rich, and we're poor? I'd like to know that. Han they done as they'd be done by for us?'

"But Wilson was no arguer. No speechifier as he would have called it. So Barton, seeing he was likely to have it his own way, went on."

Wilson then goes away to obtain a recommendation to the infirmary for his sick friend; when he returns he finds him sensible, but rapidly sinking:—

"His strength was ebbing fast. They stood round him still and silent; even the wife checked her sobs, though her heart was like to break. She held her child to her breast, to try and keep it quiet. Their eyes were all fixed on the yet living one, whose moments of life were passing so rapidly away. At length he brought, with jerking, convulsive effort, his two hands into the attitude of prayer. They saw his lips move, and bent to catch the words, which came in gasps, and not in tones.

"'Oh, Lord God! I thank thee that the hard struggle of living is over.'

"'Oh, Ben! Ben!' wailed forth his wife; 'have you no thought for me? Oh, Ben! Ben! do say one word to help me through life.'

"He could not speak again. The trump of the archangel would set his tongue free; but not a word more would it utter till then. Yet he heard, he understood, and though sight failed, he moved his hand gropingly under the covering. They knew what he meant, and guided it to her head, bowed and hidden in her hands, when she had sunk in her woe. It rested there with a feeble pressure of endearment. The face grew beautiful as the soul neared God. A peace beyond understanding came over it. The hand became a stiff, heavy weight on the wife's head. No more grief or sorrow for him. They reverently laid out the corpse—Wilson fetching his only spare shirt to array it in."

There are many other descriptions of exquisite pathos scattered up and down the narrative, some of which we would fain have extracted. But we must pass on.

Another feature in the character of the operative poor, perhaps even lovelier and brighter than their wonderful patience under suffering, is their mutual helpfulness and unbounded kindliness towards each

other. To this virtue our authoress has done full justice, and her pictures of it are so vivid, that we must present one of them at least, however long the passage, to our readers :—

"There were homes over which Carson's fire (his mill has been burnt down) threw a deep terrible gloom; the homes of those who would fain work, and no man give unto them;—the homes of those to whom leisure was a curse. There the family music was hungry wails, when week after week passed by, and there was no work to be had, and consequently no wages to pay for the bread the children cried aloud for in the young impatience of suffering. Many a penny that would have gone little way enough in oatmeal or potatoes, bought opium to still the hungry little ones, and make them forget their uneasiness in heavy troubled sleep. The evil and the good of our nature came out strongly then. There were desperate fathers; there were bitter-tongued mothers (O God! what wonder!); there were reckless children; the very closest bonds of nature were snapt in that time of trial and distress. There was faith such as the rich can never imagine upon earth; there was 'love strong as death,' and self-denial among rude coarse men, akin to that of Sir Philip Sidney's most glorious deed. The vices of the poor sometimes astound us *here;* but when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known, their virtues will astound us in far greater degree. Of this I am certain.

"As the cold bleak spring came on (spring in name alone), and consequently as trade continued dead, other mills shortened hours, turned off hands, and finally stopped work altogether. Barton worked short hours; Wilson, of course, being a hand in Carson's factory, had no work at all. . . . One evening, when the clear light at six o'clock contrasted strangely with the Christmas cold, and when the bitter wind piped down every entry, and through every cranny, Barton sat brooding over his stinted fire, and listening for Mary's step, in unacknowledged trust that her presence would cheer him. The door was opened, and Wilson came breathless in.

"'You've not got a bit of money by you, Barton?' asked he.

"'Not I; who has now, I'd like to know. Whattur do you want it for?'

"'I donnot want it for mysel, though we've none to spare.

But don ye know Ben Davenport, as worked at Carson's? He's down wi' the fever, and ne'er a stick of fire, nor a cowd potato in the house.'

"'I han got no money, I tell ye,' said Barton. Wilson looked disappointed. Barton tried not to be interested, but he could not help it, in spite of his gruffness. He rose, and went to the cupboard (his wife's pride long ago). There lay the remains of his dinner, hastily put there ready for supper. Bread, and a slice of cold fat boiled bacon. He wrapped them in his handkerchief, put them in the crown of his hat, and said, 'Come, let's be going.'

"'Going—art going to work this time of day?'

"'No, stupid, to be sure not. Going to see the fellow thou spoke on.' So they put on their hats and set out. On the way, Wilson said Davenport was a good fellow, though too much of the Methodee; that his children were too young to work, but not too young to be cold and hungry; that they had sunk lower and lower, and pawned thing after thing, and that now they lived in a cellar in Berry Street."

Here follows a sad description of the filthiness of the locality, — where

"the smell was so fœtid as almost to knock the two men down. Quickly recovering themselves, as those inured to such things do, they began to penetrate the thick darkness of the place, and to see three or four little children rolling on the damp, nay wet brick floor, through which the stagnant, filthy moisture of the street oozed up;—the fire-place was empty and black; the wife sat on her husband's chair, and cried in the dank loneliness.

"'See, missis, I'm back again. Hold your noise, children, and don't mither your mammy for bread; here's a chap as has got some for you.'

"In that dim light, which was darkness to strangers, they clustered round John Barton, and tore from him the food he had brought with him. It was a large hunch of bread, but it had vanished in an instant.

"'We mun do summut for 'em,' said he to Wilson. 'Yo stop here, and I'll be back in half an hour.'

"So he strode, and ran, and hurried home. He emptied into the ever-useful pocket-handkerchief the little meal remaining in the mug. Mary would have her tea at Miss Simmonds'; her food

for the day was safe. Then he went up stairs for his better coat, and his one, gay red-and-yellow silk pocket-handkerchief—his jewels, his plate, his valuables, these were. He went to the pawn-shop; he pawned them for five shillings; he stopped not, nor stayed, till he was once more in London Road, within five minutes' walk of Berry Street—then he loitered in his gait, in order to discover the shops he wanted. He bought meat, and a loaf of bread, candles, chips; and from a little retail yard he purchased a couple of hundredweight of coals. Some money yet remained—all destined for them, but he did not yet know how best to spend it. Food, light, and warmth, he had seen instantly were necessary; for luxuries he would wait. Wilson's eyes filled with tears as he saw Barton enter with his purchases. He understood it all; and longed to be once more in work, that he might help in some of these material ways, without feeling that he was using his son's money. But though 'silver and gold had he none,' he gave heart-service, and love-works of far more value. Nor was John Barton behind in these. . . . .

"The two men, rough, tender nurses as they were, lighted the fire, which smoked and puffed into the room, as if it did not know its way up the chimney. The children clamoured again for bread; but this time Barton took a piece first to the poor, helpless, hopeless woman, who still sat by the side of her husband, listening to his anxious miserable mutterings. She took the bread, when it was put into her hands, and broke a bit, but could not eat. She was past hunger. She fell down on the floor, with a heavy unresisting bang. The men looked puzzled. . . . .

"'I'll tell you what I'll do,' said Wilson. 'I'll take these two big lads, as does naught but fight, home to my missis's for to-night, and I will get a jug of tea. Them women always does best with tea and such like slops.'

"So Barton was now left alone with a little child, crying (when it had done eating) for mammy; with a fainting deadlike woman; and with the sick man; whose mutterings were rising up to screams and shrieks of agonised anxiety. He carried the woman to the fire, and chafed her hands. He looked around for something to raise her head. There was literally nothing but some loose bricks. However, those he got; and taking off his coat, he covered them as well as he could. He pulled her feet to the fire, which now began to emit some faint heat. He looked round for water, but water there was none. He snatched up the child, and

ran up the area steps to the room above, and borrowed their only saucepan with some water in it. Then he began, with the useful skill of a working man, to make some gruel. . . . ."

We are proud to be enabled to testify that the scene presented in this extract is not only true to individual life, but it is the expression of a general fact. There is scarcely any degree of trouble and self-denial which men in this class will not encounter to serve their fellow-sufferers; and no service is more cheerfully and punctually repaid when the position of the parties is reversed. To the poor man, poverty greater than his own never appeals in vain :—

> "To give the stranger's children bread,
> Of your precarious board the spoil —
> To watch your helpless neighbour's bed,
> And, sleepless, meet the morrow's toil."

These are the daily offerings of mutual love which we witness among the lowest members of the struggling artisans. And perhaps they ought to surprise us less than they do: for in contrasting them with the comparative dulness and indifference of the wealthy to the sufferings of those below them, we are apt to lose sight of two very relevant considerations; one is, that sympathy—meaning by it fellow-feeling—*can* only exist in its fullest extent among persons of the same condition, surrounded by the same circumstances, inured to the same privations,—who know that the distress they are called upon to mitigate was their own yesterday, and may be their own again to-morrow. What is thus true sympathy between the poor, becomes, when transferred to the relation between rich and poor, what

is commonly expressed by the word compassion—a sentiment far feebler and less complete. Moreover, the rich can never have the same knowledge of the troubles and difficulties of the poor, which the poor have of their own. Their paths lie apart. However much they may endeavour to visit among them, to become familiar with their circumstances, and acquainted with their griefs,—they *can* do all this, from the very nature of the case, only very imperfectly. There is not only the natural difficulty arising from discrepancy of life, feelings, and position, to be overcome; but the very shrinking and reluctant pride of the independent poor opposes another barrier. Difference of position, therefore, lies at the root of the alleged want of sympathy: And, inadequate knowledge—under circumstances in which the inadequacy is inevitable—must bear at least half the blame of the apparent want of compassion with which the more prosperous are charged. If rich and poor could but change places for a while, they would understand each other better ever afterwards—and make more allowances for their respective failings.

Another consideration to which due weight is seldom allowed, is this: the cause which, of all others, most deadens and restrains the hand of charity, is the fear of bestowing it unworthily and mischievously. Immense difficulty is experienced by the rich, when they attempt to discriminate between cases of imposture, and cases of real destitution,—between cases which it would be a duty and a delight, and cases

which it would often be a sin and a mischief to relieve. The poor experience no such difficulty. They have to guard against no imposition: for imposition with them would be easily and certainly detected. Their means and their feelings may be safely taken therefore as guides.

But we are putting off the unpleasant part of our duty. There are representations made—at least impressions left—by the book before us, which we have signalised as inaccurate and full of harm. Some of these we must proceed to notice: and first among them, the exaggeration of describing an animosity against masters and employers, as the common quality and characteristic of the operative population. The narrative imports that the angry and vindictive feelings by which the soul of John Barton is absorbed, are constant and pervading.

"I saw (says the writer in the preface) that they were sore and irritable against the rich; the even tenor of whose seemingly happy lives appeared to increase the anguish caused by the lottery-like nature of their own. Whether the bitter complaints made by them of the neglect which they experienced from the prosperous—especially from the masters whose fortunes they had helped to build up—were well founded or no, it is not for me to judge. It is enough to say that this belief of the injustice and unkindness which they endure from their fellow-creatures, taints what might be resignation to God's will, and turns it to revenge in too many of the poor uneducated factory-workers of Manchester. . . . At present they seem to me to be left in a state, wherein lamentations and tears are thrown aside as useless, but in which the lips are compressed for curses, and the hands clenched and ready to smite."

Now we do not hesitate to say that the impression conveyed by such statements as this, is, to say the

least, a material overcolouring of the truth. It is presumptuous, perhaps, to pronounce decidedly upon a point on which opinions will vary;—the experience of every man of course depending on the local and personal circumstances in which he has been thrown. But both our own observation, and the confirming views of others whose acquaintance with artisan life has been even more extensive and intimate than our own, enable us to speak with some confidence. It is unquestionably and unfortunately true, that sentiments of animosity of this description do exist in a considerable degree, and in a degree which varies with the times. All that we contend for is, that they are exceptional, not general—local, limited, and transient,—and certainly not entertained by the working population at large. As a picture of an individual,—that is, of the feelings of this or that person,—John Barton is unhappily true to the life: as the type of a class, though a small one, he may be allowed to pass muster: but to bring him forward as a fair representative of the artisans and factory operatives of Manchester, and similar towns generally, is a libel alike upon them and upon the objects of their alleged hatred. Much, no doubt, has been done, and is still being done, by those emissaries of ill-will who live upon the passions they excite, to create and foster bad feeling between classes so intimately bound together, as the manufacturing capitalist and the manufacturing labourer. Much has been done, too, both by senators and journalists, through slanders protected by privilege of

parliament, and propagated by that mighty press, against whose injuries there is no defence, towards spreading among the more distant public the belief that this bad feeling does exist to a perilous extent. Notwithstanding which, however, we rejoice to know that the feeling is becoming every year rarer and less acrimonious;* that it is more and more exclusively confined to the irregular, dissolute, and discontented *ex*-workmen who form the acting staff of trades' unions and delegations; and more and more exclusively directed against those employers—daily becoming fewer—who look upon the operatives they employ in the mingled light of coadjutors and antagonists—with whom their only concern is to drive as hard a bargain as they can; and that it is fast giving way before the increasing conviction of a common interest, and the humanising influence of faithful services rendered, on the one hand, and just treatment, willing aid, and benevolent kindness on the other.

There is, too, it seems to us, a double error, both an artistic error, and an error of fact, in representing a man of Barton's intelligence and habits of reflection and discussion, to be so ignorant of the first principles of commercial and economic science as he is here described. Probably this arises from the writer's acknowledged acquaintance with social and political economy herself, and from her ignorance how far the rudiments

* This was true then:—I fear it is not true now—evil influences of many sorts, working through a generation, have done their business too effectually.

of these sciences have been mastered by the more thoughtful and the better educated artisans of our large towns. But indeed the lights and shades are thrown too strongly on everything relating to John Barton. The effect may have thus been made more startling: but, we think, at the expense of probability. It is not that he has, more or less, two natures. That is common to us all. Our objection is, that his conduct is radically inconsistent with his qualities and character. He is not only an intelligent man, but a steady and skilful workman; and so confident in his own capacity always procuring for him certain employment, that he never, when in receipt of the highest wages (vol. i. p. 33.), lays by a farthing for a time of sickness at home, or stagnation of trade. Meanwhile, whenever these periods come, he is found cursing his masters instead of his own improvidence; spending his time and money on trades' unions, when both his child and himself are unsupplied with the barest necessaries of life; and wasting (as so many operatives do), in subscriptions for such objects, funds which, duly husbanded, would have saved his only son (whose loss, we are told, has warped his temper) from an early grave. Yet neither to the authoress, nor to the supposed subject of her delineation, is it at any time intimated as occurring that, if ever there was a clear case in which a man had to thank himself for most of his sorrows and misfortunes, John Barton's was that case. On the contrary, he is painted as utterly unconscious, even to the last, of his own improvidence, and of its sinister influence on his condition.

Instead of drawing from his privations those lessons of warning and remorse which, to an intellect like his, must have been as patent as the day, they are merely made to heap up fresh fuel for that funeral pile, to which his senseless and vindictive passion is at last to set fire.

There is evil enough in the world, God knows, and we all know, to try the temper, we will not say the faith, of both rich and poor; and the evils of society press often with crushing severity on the poor:—

"At all times it is a bewildering thing for the poor weaver to see his employer removing from house to house, each one grander than the last, till he ends in building one more magnificent than all, or withdraws his money from the concern, or sells his mill to buy an estate in the country, while all this time the weaver, who thinks that he and his fellows are the real makers of this wealth, is struggling on for bread for his children, through the vicissitudes of lowered wages, short hours, fewer hands employed, &c. And when he knows trade is bad, and could understand (at least partially) that there are not buyers enough in the market to purchase the goods already made, and consequently that there is no demand for more; when he would bear much without complaining, could he also see that his employers were bearing their share; he is, I say, bewildered, and (to use his own phrase) 'aggravated' to see that all goes on just as usual with the mill-owners. Large houses are still occupied, while spinners' and weavers' cottages stand empty, because the families that once occupied them are obliged to live in rooms or cellars. Carriages still roll along the streets, concerts are still crowded with subscribers, the shops for expensive luxuries still find daily customers, while the workman loiters away his unemployed time in watching these things, and thinking of the pale, uncomplaining wife at home, and the wailing children asking in vain for enough of food, of the sinking health, of the dying life of those near and dear to him. The contrast is too great."

The following quotation is from the same conversation between Barton and his friend Wilson, of which

we have already quoted a part. They are discussing the same subject—the difference between their master's lot and their own :—

"Barton, seeing he was likely to have his own way, went on,

"'You'll say (at least many a one does) they'n gotton capital, and we'n gotton none. I say, our labour's our capital, and we ought to draw interest on that. They get interest on their capital, somehow all this time, while our'n is lying idle, else how could they all live as they do? Besides, there's many of them had nought to begin with; there's Carsons, and Duncombes, and Margies, and many another, as comed into Manchester with clothes to their back, and that were all, and now they're worth their tens of thousands, a' getten out of our labour;—why, the very hand as fetched but sixty pounds twenty year agone, is worth six hundred now, and that, too, is owing to our labour;—but look at yo, and see me, and poor Davenport yonder; whatten better are we? They'n screwed us down to the lowest peg, in order to make their great big fortunes, and build their great big houses, and we—why we're just clemming, many and many of us. Can you say there's nought wrong in this?'

"'Well, Barton, I'll not gainsay ye. But Mr Carson spoke to me after the fire, and, says he, "I shall ha' to retrench, and be very careful in my expenditure during these bad times, I assure ye;"—so yo see th' masters suffer to.'

"'Han they ever seen a child o' their'n die for want of food?' asked Barton in a low deep voice."

Now here was a most favourable occasion for pointing out the just reflections to be drawn from such a contrast; yet it is so entirely passed by, that we are constrained to conclude that they were unperceived by the writer herself. It is, we fear, too true that some envy, and much exasperation, do arise, at times, in the breasts of the more inconsiderate of the manufacturing poor, when they see those periods of commercial depression, which press so heavily upon themselves,

borne so easily and with so little apparent privation by their masters. But there was only the more reason for seizing the opportunity to impress upon them both the real fact and the real philosophy of the case. It was only the more necessary to inform them (as numerous stoppages of wealthy firms might indeed readily bring home to their conviction) that their masters *do* suffer, and suffer most painfully, from those reverses and stagnation of trade, which they imagine to fall solely on themselves; to picture, however cursorily, the position of those employers who, on such occasions, have seen the accumulations of years of patient and honest industry suddenly swept away, and who, at an advanced period of life, have had to set to work to reconstruct the shattered fabric of their fortunes—and of those who, compromised more deeply still, find the prospects of their children blighted, their objects defeated, and their occupation gone. It is not true that such periods as 1842, when the scene of the narrative is laid, pass lightly over any of the great employers of manufacturing labour. Their sufferings are not the less severe, because the worst part of them are of a kind into which their dependants cannot at once enter. And the simple reason—the explanation which lies upon the surface—why they do not suffer as severely and as *obviously* as the operatives is, that *they*, in the days of prosperity, had laid by a portion of their earnings, and that the operatives had not; and that, therefore, when profits ceased, and losses took their place—a change which long precedes the reduction of wages,

or the cessation of employment—they could subsist out of their previous savings, while the improvident operatives had no savings to fall back upon. How came it never to occur to the authoress, or to her hero, that had Mr Carson (who is represented as having raised himself from the operative class) thought as little of saving as John Barton, who so envied and so wronged him, their condition and their sufferings, when the period of distress arrived, would have been precisely equal? It was, in truth, because the one had been prudent and foreseeing, and the other confident and careless—because the one had busied himself about his work, while the other had busied himself about unions and politics, that their positions, when the evil day came, which came alike to both, were so strangely contrasted.*

* We admit readily, however, and should always bear in mind, that the sufferings of the operative, even when occasioned by what may be called the total ruin of the master, are, while they last, greatly more intense than the master's. There is no instance, we suppose, of a bankrupt master being reduced to the squallid cellar life of the Davenports, or even to breaking stones on the highways, or to the asylum of the workhouse. Unless he has been fraudulent as well as unfortunate or imprudent, his connections, or even his creditors, interpose to save him from these dreadful extremities; and it would be equally heartless and absurd to deny that *these* are beyond measure worse, and more trying to both our moral and our physical nature, than a mere descent from wealth to poverty, from the luxuries and vanities of life to its scantiest comforts, cares, and privations. There is this approach, however, to a compensation in the case of the operative, that his trials, though more bitter and overwhelming for the time, are generally shorter. The enterprising manufacturer, who loses in one desolating season the wealth accumulated by the patient and anxious labour of many preceding

The forgetfulness—or the delusion, whichever it be —which we have here noted, is unhappily so common, and it discloses so much of the secret both of the present and the future condition of the manufacturing population, that we must dwell upon it for a few moments longer. People at a distance are not aware, either to what an extent the actual wealth of the master manufacturers is the result of patient savings from very moderate *average* profits, nor (which is our immediate point) of the extent to which saving is within the power of the factory operatives. In the first place, it should be known that, in spite of all we hear of fluctuations and stagnation of trade, this class suffers less perhaps than any other from variations of employment. There are two reasons for this: one is, that their employers, being generally wealthy, are able to carry on their business through any *ordinary* periods of depression, without curtailing or suspending production; in other words, they can afford to hold stocks. The other reason is, that the fixed capital employed is generally so large, and the consequent loss when it stands idle so enormous, that mills are never

years, can seldom hope to regain either the fortune or the position he has lost; and he generally passes the remainder of his life a broken-spirited and unprosperous man—while as soon as employment returns, the operative is as well off, and too often as imprudent as ever; and though the thoughtful and sensitive among them may be occasionally depressed or irritated by anticipating the probable recurrence of such terrible visitations, it is certainly true that a far larger proportion of them soon recover their natural cheerfulness, than is the case with the unfortunate among their employers.

allowed to stop if it is *possible* to keep them going. A large manufacturer, according to the evidence of the factory inspectors, cannot stop his factory without a dead loss of from £4000 to £5000 a year. Profits, therefore, cease long before either wages or employment are affected; and it is only after a long continuance of unprofitable trade, that either are reduced. Operatives are often now, indeed, aware of this fact; and, therefore, when their employer closes his mill, they know what an amount of pecuniary pressure such a step indicates, and they feel that he must be truly a fellow-sufferer. In the winter of 1847-8, when, owing to the failure in the American cotton crop, a greater number of mills ceased working or reduced their hours of work, than had ever previously been the case, so well was this understood, that scarcely one angry murmur or reproach was heard, though the sufferings of the people were severe beyond all former example.

But not only is the employment of the factory population generally constant and regular, their wages also have long been, and doubtless will soon again be, comparatively very high. The wages of men in most such establishments vary from 10s. to 40s., and those of girls and women from 7s. to 15s. a week. And, as from the nature of the work, in which even children can be made serviceable, several individuals of the same family are generally employed, the earnings of a family will very frequently reach £100 a year—and by no means unfrequently, when the father is an overlooker or a spinner, £150 to £170—a sum on which families

in a much higher rank contrive to live in decency and comfort. Saving then, out of such earnings, is obviously not only practicable but easy. Unhappily it is rare: for not only is much wasted at the ale-house (more, we fear, now than formerly); not only is much squandered in subscriptions to trades' unions and *strikes;* but among the more highly paid operatives, spinners especially, gambling both by betting and at cards is carried on to a deplorable extent.* Much also is lost by bad housewifery; and we do not scruple to affirm that, were it possible (and who shall say that it is not?) to transport among these people, those thrifty habits, that household management, that shrewd, sober, steady conduct, characteristic of the Scotch peasantry, and which are so well depicted in Somerville's "Autobiography of a Working Man;" not merely comfort, but wealth and independence, would speedily become the rule instead of the exception among our Manchester artisans. Even as it is, we are cognisant of many cases where hundreds—in some instances thousands—of pounds have been laid by, for future calls, by factory workmen. Indeed, whenever you find one of this class too sensible or too religious to frequent the ale-house, too shrewd or too peaceable to subscribe to clubs or turn-outs, and wise

* We have now lying before us some particulars, showing the prevalence of this vice, in one single factory. One man had lost £7, another £3, another £2, 10s. in a single night at cards. In the same mill the losses incurred on one occasion, in the betting on a foot-race, by the hands in one department only, exceeded £12.

enough to spend his money efficiently, or to marry a wife who can; you are almost sure to learn that he has some independent property—often deposited in his master's hands, oftener still laid out in the purchase of cottages or railway shares. Many of them become in time managers of mills, and, ultimately, proprietors and master manufacturers.

As a confirmation of this statement, and as a contrast to the unnatural blindness and self-delusion of John Barton, we will give a picture drawn from the life by one thoroughly acquainted with the operative classes in the northern end, at least, of the island. It is an account of the actual progress upwards of a young mechanic, given by Mr Robert Chambers.

"Englishmen have much to be thankful for, inasmuch as there is probably no country on the face of the globe where sober, industrious young mechanics and labourers, can so soon raise themselves to ease, comparative independence, and comfort, as in England. Many instances in real life might be given in proof thereof. Yet our present purpose may be best answered by presenting the case of one who, having lost his father and mother in childhood, has been indebted to the kind-hearted for the school learning he has acquired. During his apprenticeship he gained little beyond habits of industry. In the seven years of his apprenticeship, his master fell from a respectable station to one of abject poverty; owing to his taking the one glass, then the two, three, four, and onwards, till, by steps almost imperceptible, his business and family were neglected, whilst he joined his associates at the ale-house. But let us not dwell on this sad picture. On completing his twenty-first year, our orphan boy engaged in a situation where he received 15s. per week wages; 8s of which he appropriated to food and lodgings, and 2s to clothing, and a few books, to rub up his school-day learning. Warned by the example of his late master, he shunned the ale-house, and his steady conduct soon gained him the confidence of his employer, who, at the end of his first

year, raised his wages to 21s per week. At the end of the second year he found himself possessed of £40; 5s per week had been regularly deposited in the bank for savings during the first year, which amounted to £13; and in the second year 11s per week, which was £28, 12s more. We need not follow him step by step in his steady but onward course. He has now been nineteen years in his present situation; for the last ten he has been the foreman, with a salary of 30s per week. Twelve years ago he married a virtuous young woman, and he has now six fine children. The house he lives in is his own: a good garden is attached to it, and a fruitful and lovely spot it is; it serves as an excellent training ground for his children, whose very amusements in it are turned to good account. The mother brought no fortune with her, except herself. She had, indeed, lived as servant some years in a respectable family, where she had high wages; but all she could spare was devoted to the support of an infirm mother, who, on her marriage, was received into her husband's house, where the evening of her life is rendered happy. How is it, you ask, that a man of forty years of age, who has had nothing to depend upon but his own labour—who has a wife and six children, and an infirm mother-in-law to support—can have bought a piece of ground, built a house upon it, and can have it well furnished, and, after all, has upwards of £200 out on interest? for he has been a servant all along, and is a servant still. Well, let us see if we can find out how it is. In the first place, and which, after all, is the main point, he spends nothing at the ale-house. The money which too many worse than waste there, he saves. At the age of twenty-three we find he had in the bank of savings £40.

At the age of	24	he has	-	-	£70
,,	25	,,	-	-	102
,,	26	,,	-	-	135
,,	27	,,	-	-	170
,,	28	,,	-	-	206

He now marries, and expends on furniture £40, reducing the amount at interest to £166, but his wages are now advanced to 25s per week; his saving of 5s per week and interest in one year amount to £21, added to £166, makes £187, when twenty-nine years of age.

"At thirty years of age he has £210; wages now 30s per week; saves 10s and interest; he has £237 at thirty-one years of age; at

thirty-two he has £286; buys a plot of ground for £100; expends £150 in building his dwelling-house, so that he reduces his money at interest to £36, saves his 10s per week and interest on £36—£27, 16s, makes £63, 16s, at the age of thirty-three.

At 34 he has	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	£93
„ 35 „	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	125
„ 36 „	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	155
„ 37 „	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	181
„ 38 „	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	207

He now expends the interest, and saves only 10s per week.

At 39 he has	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	£233
„ 40 „	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	250

in addition to his house and garden."

It is with many such facts as these fresh in our recollection, and with the knowledge that such facts might easily become characteristic of a whole class,—instead of remaining that of isolated individuals,—that we feel most vividly the injurious tendency of a tale like "Mary Barton," where these facts are wholly ignored, and the salutary conclusions to be drawn from them neglected or suppressed. The whole book, too, is pervaded by one fatally false idea, which seems to have taken possession of the writer's mind, and can scarcely fail to be impressed with equal vividness on the merely passive reader, viz., that the poor are to look to the rich, and not to themselves, for relief and rescue from their degraded condition and their social miseries. An impression more utterly erroneous, or more lamentably mischievous, it is difficult to conceive. It strikes at the root of all social improvement. It is a thoughtless echo of the virulent declamations daily sounded in the ears of the artisans by the worst of their intestine enemies. For who are the men who thus habitually

labour to persuade the operatives to lay the burden of their own sins and follies at the door of their employers? Never the really distressed—never those who have struggled manfully against destitution, and have struggled in vain; but very generally those who have thrown up lucrative employment, because they preferred travelling and haranguing to steady and honest toil:—or those whose dissolute and turbulent conduct has occasioned their dismissal, and rendered them marked and dishonoured men throughout the trade; or those who (like some we have already mentioned) will spend in card-playing or betting, in a single night, the income of many weeks.

The plain truth cannot be too boldly spoken, or too frequently repeated: the artisan classes, and they only, can raise their own condition; to themselves alone must they look for their elevation in the social scale; their own intellect and their own virtues must work out their salvation; their fate and their future are in their own hands,—and in theirs alone. Of the power of the agricultural population to do all this, we should speak more doubtingly, if we spoke at all; but in reference to the manufacturing and mechanical operatives, we speak with the conviction of positive knowledge (and the facts we have just mentioned cannot fail, we think, to obtain some credit for us, with most of our readers), when we pronounce, that for them to be as well off in *their* station as their employers are in theirs—as well provided against the evil day of depression and reverse—as comfortable, according to

their standard of comfort, in their daily life—as respectable in their domestic circumstances,—little more is necessary than that they should emulate their employers—especially the last generation of their employers—instead of envying them: that they should imitate their prudence and worldly wisdom, their unresting diligence, their unflagging energy, their resolute and steady economy. It is not higher wages, nor more unvarying employment, that our artisans need. As it is, they are more highly paid than many clerks, many schoolmasters, many curates. But, with their present habits, twice their present earnings would not mend their position. The want is moral, not material; —a better education, to give purer tastes and higher aims,—strength and sense to withstand present temptation,—the courage to differ from their associates, and to pursue unflinchingly their chosen course.

With these qualities, they would have no need to call on the rich or on the legislature to assist them. They could attain the desired position without asking aid from their employers. In the absence of these qualities, no aid from any quarter can avail them one iota. The efforts of all the philanthropists that ever *ran a-muck* at evil could not render them any permanent service. Endow the wealthy employers of labour with all power and all knowledge, imbue their hearts with the kindliest affections, let them call in legislative aid without measure and without stint; and all combined would still remain as incompetent as at present, to bestow one real blessing, to render

one abiding service to men who will lend no helping hand to their own emancipation, who persist in standing aloof from the cure of their own malady, and expect to achieve comfort and independence, while refusing to pay down the appointed purchase-money of frugality and foresight. The desperate delusion that the evils of society are to be remedied from *without*, not from *within*, that the people are to be passive parties, — and not the principal, almost the sole, agents,—in their own rehabilitation, has met with far too general countenance in quarters where sounder wisdom might have been looked for. The language held on this subject in parliament, by the periodical press, and in such works as this before us, has gone far to confirm their notions of their own helplessness, and thus perpetuate their supineness; and, by so doing, has inflicted a degree of mischief on the labouring class, which, if it be persevered in, all the benevolent exertions made to relieve them must prove utterly powerless to countervail. The sounder, sterner, healthier doctrine, which we have ventured to enunciate,—hard as it may seem to preach it in a period of distress,—is the only one which can prevent this distress from perpetual and aggravated recurrence. The language which every true friend to the working man will hold to him, is this: "Trust to no external source for your prosperity in life; work out your own welfare; work it out with the tools you have. The charter may be a desirable object, the franchise may be worth obtaining; but your happiness, your position

in life, will depend neither on the franchise nor the charter, neither on what parliament does, nor on what your employer neglects to do; but simply and solely upon the use you make of the fifteen or thirty shillings which you earn each week, and upon the circumstance whether you marry at twenty or at twenty-eight, and whether you marry a sluggard and a slattern or a prudent and industrious woman." We are as certain as we can be of anything, that, if the factory operatives and mechanics were possessed of the education, the frugality, the prudence, and the practical sense which generally distinguish their employers, no change whatever, either in the regularity or the remuneration of their work, would be needed, to place them, as a body, in a state of independence, dignity, and comfort.

The peculiar feature in the character of the manufacturing operatives, which, next to their careless and spendthrift habits, has wrought them most suffering, and which, when we regard their immediate future, has saddened us at times almost to despondency, is their want of moral courage, of resolute individual will. No one, who has not been a close observer of them, can have a conception of the ease with which they are led to act, not only against their own interests, but against their own wishes, by any person of their own class who chooses to assume the right of giving orders. Instances are of yearly, sometimes almost of daily occurrence, where numbers in receipt of comfortable wages, in regular work, under an employer whom they respect

and like, enjoying, in fact, a position in every way satisfactory, and without any alleged or even imagined ground of complaint, have suddenly left their work, and thrown up all these advantages, on receiving a command to do so—without even waiting to ascertain whether the command emanated from a competent authority, sometimes even without waiting to inquire by whom the command was given. Instances have come to our knowledge where a whole class of factory operatives have struck work in a body, simply because one or two discontented individuals of their own number told them to do so—although the vast majority obeyed with the greatest unwillingness, and though the certain consequences were severe suffering. In the year 1842, cases occurred of hundreds of quarrymen and masons throwing down their tools and retiring to their homes —thus depriving themselves and their families of food —for no other reason than because a man had run into the place where they were working, and had told them that they were not to strike another stroke! The idea of resistance to an order emanating from one of themselves, or from a union committee, formed (though they know not and inquire not how) out of their own body, seems never to occur to them. They have no power of *will*. The minority, often a very small, unknown, and invisible minority—commands the whole. Most *strikes*, in fact, are the act of the few against the wishes of the many. This non-resistance arises in part from the want of individual character among the operatives— "they don't like (they say) not to do as the others do;"

—and partly from the considerations thus expressed by a shrewd old workman in the book before us :—

"'You're one of the Union, Job?' asked Mary.

"'Aye—I'm one, sure enough; but I'm but a sleeping partner in the concern. I were obliged to become a member for peace, else I don't go along with 'em. You see my folly is this, Mary. I would take what I could get; I think half a loaf is better than no bread. I would work for low wages rather than sit idle and starve. But then comes the Trades' Union, and says, "Well, if you take the half loaf, we'll worry you out of your life. Will you be clemmed, or will you be worried?" Now clemming is a quiet death, and worrying isn't; so I choose clemming, and come into the Union.'"

This inability to resist evil counsel, this fatal facility of temper is the more serious in our estimation, because we do not see how it is to be cured. It is unquestionably significant of a low degree of intellectual culture; but it is at the same time a weakness which these classes share with many far above them in social rank and educational advantages. Mere instruction does not confer strength of will and courage for individual action. The number of those in any class who dare to think and act for themselves in opposition to the more active and noisy among them is lamentably small; and we cannot reasonably expect it to be greater among uneducated operatives than elsewhere, though perhaps in no rank does it produce more sad results.

There are several minor points in which the authoress of "Mary Barton" has laid herself open to serious criticism, which want of space compels us to pass by. Two, however, we must notice. The first is the counte-

nance she gives to the trite and shallow error, that labour is a curse—that the poor are to be pitied for the obligation to daily toil which their state imposes, and that the poor *only* are ordained to toil. These popular misconceptions, which so many writers reiterate without reflection, carry with them the seeds of much mischief. The very expression so commonly employed "*condemned* to labour"—conveys a radically false view of human nature. It implants in the mind of the poor man the idea that the condition of his existence is a hardship; and in the mind of the rich the still more fatal fallacy, that idleness is a dignity and a privilege. Two worse errors could scarcely take possession of the popular mind; and probably the greatest service rendered by Mr Carlyle to the cause of social truth and progress is due to the vigour with which he has attacked them, and has vindicated the happiness and the nobility of labour. The doctrine that the necessity of labour is a blessing, and not a curse, cannot be insisted upon too strongly. It is to this very necessity that mankind owes not only its first redemption from the savage state, but every step of its advance in a civilisation, from which, we trust, a great deal more may be expected still.

The misery and worthlessness of those who—exempted from the need of labouring for their daily bread—find no intellectual or social work calling on them for exertion—"the killing langour and over laboured lassitude of those who have nothing to do,"—if it could be faithfully depicted, would send back many a discon-

tented artisan to his anvil or his loom, pacified and thankful:

> "How men would mock at Pleasure's shows,
> Her golden promise, if they knew
> What weary work she is to those
> Who have no better work to do!"

While, on the other hand, the severe application, the grinding anxieties of the merchant and the civil engineer, the weary eye, the exhausted brain, the shattered nerves of the statesman, the student, the lawyer, or the mathematician, would appal those on whom is laid the far easier task of manual exertion. That unremunerated toil is a heavy weird, no man will deny; but this is probably rarer among daily labourers than among any other class. That toil so unremitting as to wear out the frame, and leave no leisure for domestic enjoyments or for intellectual culture, is a sore evil, is no less unquestionable; but it is an evil shared in this country by nearly all classes. Those who do not work at all, none but a worthless sluggard will envy; and those who work, either with the hand or brain, whether lawyers, senators, merchants, or operatives, have all to work harder than is desirable. The cure for this general social evil must be sought in the gradual spread of simpler habits, and in a juster appreciation of the great objects of our being. But, that the poor have any *special* reason to complain of excessive toil—far less, that they are entitled to murmur because daily labour is their lot in life—is a statement to which we can never subscribe; since we believe it to be any-

thing but true. What says one of their kindest hearted friends ?—

" Heart of the People!—Working men!
Marrow and nerve of human powers;
Who on your sturdy backs sustain
Through streaming Time this world of ours;

" Hold by that title—which proclaims
That ye are undismayed and strong,
Accomplishing whatever aims
May to the sons of earth belong.

" Yet not on ye alone depend
These offices, or burdens fall;
Labour, for some or other end,
Is lord and master of us all.

* * * *

" Then in content possess your hearts,
Unenvious of each other's lot;
For those which seem the easiest parts
Have travail which ye reckon not.

" And he is bravest, happiest, best,
Who, from the task within his span,
Earns for himself his evening rest,
And an increase of good for man."

The second of the two faults in " Mary Barton," to which we have referred, is this. There is an impression left by it upon the mind—an impression, too, which is the legitimate and inevitable result of the statements and the descriptions it contains—which yet is entirely unfounded and unjust. It would be impossible for any one to read " Mary Barton," and take from it his opinion of the relations between rich and poor in the manufacturing towns, without coming to the conclusion (even if it were not distinctly asserted,

as at page 130 of the first volume, and elsewhere,) that there exists an entire want of kindly feeling between them,—that the sufferings of the operatives are generally disregarded by their employers, and that no effort is made to relieve them, even in times of the severest pressure. Now every one acquainted with the districts in question will bear us out, when we affirm that no representation can be further from the truth. The writer sinks, as if ignorant of them—and we hope she is,—a whole class of facts, of which, however, it is scarcely possible that she should have been totally uninformed. For it is notorious, that in no town are there better organised or more efficient charities than in Manchester. Besides the usual medical institutions, infirmaries, dispensaries, eye-hospitals, lying-in-hospitals, &c.,—which are unusually numerous and accessible—there is a district visiting society (and it has been in operation many years) which would render the unknown and unrelieved existence of such distress, as is described in the case of the Davenports, almost impossible. In the two periods of severest distress which have been known of late years, in 1842 and 1847,—when, owing to the stagnation of trade, many operatives were partially, and some wholly, unemployed—the most vigorous efforts were made by the philanthropic of all classes, to bring relief home to every poor man's door. In 1842, soup kitchens were open for eight months ; soup and rice to the extent of 800 gallons were distributed—affording relief to about 4000 persons daily. In 1847, nearly double the

amount was subscribed for the same purpose; and from 6000 to 8000 individuals received gratuitously, for many months, daily rations of bread and soup. At Stockport, a much smaller town, and one almost exclusively inhabited by master manufacturers and their workmen, the amount of subscriptions raised during the distress of 1842 was £4200, besides several hundred tons of coal which were distributed among the poor; and for several months, the average number of individuals relieved every week exceeded 14,000. Similar assistance was afforded with equal liberality in Bolton, Bury, and most other towns. In addition to this, master manufacturers, in many instances, distributed to their unemployed people large quantities of soup and flour for months together,—doing all indeed that the nature of the case possibly admitted of. Nor were the masters, of whom we are speaking, men of uncommon benevolence. In fact, we do not believe that any manufacturers could be found (unless, perhaps, some few of the neediest and most uneducated) who did not attend, at once and gladly, to any application for assistance from their own people—even where they might not take the initiative in searching out cases of privation. We have good reason to believe, also, that there are very few reputable families among the factory operatives, who have not some friends among the upper classes to whom they could apply on such an occasion. That a steady and religious family like the Davenports, could have fallen into the state of helpless and squalid wretchedness which the authoress has de-

picted, no one acquainted with the poor of Manchester will easily believe; or that families like the Bartons and the Wilsons would not have been readily assisted in the time of want by their former employers. Therefore we say, that in so resolutely ignoring all the kindness felt for the people, and all the willing and anxious assistance rendered to them by their employers, the authoress of "Mary Barton" has done grievous injustice to a whole class,—has most inconsiderately fostered the ill-opinion of them known to exist in certain quarters—and has, unintentionally no doubt, but most unfortunately, flattered both the prejudices of the aristocracy, and the passions of the populace. *

The basis of the book—the master idea which pervades it—is the old dispute between capital and labour—as to the *distribution* of that wealth which is the joint production of the two. The operative is represented as utterly bewildered by seeing his employer,

* About twelve or fifteen years later than the date of "Mary Barton," a crisis came which gave the lie in the completest manner to the mistaken pictures of the author on this topic. The civil war in America stopped suddenly, and to the extent of about one half, the supply of cotton on which Lancashire artisans depended for their living. The "cotton famine" swept away at once the profits of the master and the earnings of the men. At one period, in spite of every effort to find work elsewhere, 500,000 were dependent upon charitable funds. Was any apathy or stinginess shown in raising those funds? Let three bare facts reply. A most energetic Committee, *composed mainly of Master Manufacturers*, took the matter in hand at once, and worked as at their own business; £2,735,000 was the total sum collected; and of that sum £1,480,000 came from Lancashire, and in a great measure from the Mill-Owners who were suffering under the common calamity.

to all appearance, steadily and rapidly advancing in the world, in spite of the vicissitudes of trade; while he himself, in consequence of those vicissitudes, is left to struggle, and often to struggle in vain, for daily bread. He is said to be disgusted and enraged at that *unequal division* of the profits of their combined exertions, in which alone he can find the explanation of this irritating difference in their lot. Now, it is unquestionably true that this feeling does exist in the minds of many operatives; though the intensity and the prevalence of it are both exaggerated. It is manifest, too, that the writer before us shares in the feeling; and recent publications have shown that it is shared also by economists and thinkers of a far higher order. In fact, this "vehement and bitter cry of labour against capital,"* for a fairer division of profits, is as old as society itself, and will endure as long—because it arises from that principle in human nature

* Mr Macaulay has given us a curious specimen (Hist. of Eng. vol. i. p. 419,) of this in an old ballad, which was popular in the time of Charles II. "The master clothier is satirically introduced, —declaring that

> "'In former ages we used to give,
> So that our workfolks like farmers did live;
> But the times are changed, we will make them to know.
> * * * * *
> We will make them to work hard for sixpence a day,
> Tho' a shilling they deserve, if they had their just pay;
> If at all they murmur, and say 'tis too small,
> We bid them choose whether they'll work at all.
> And thus we do gain all our wealth and estate,
> By many poor men that work early and late.'"

which must always make every man an unjust judge and an unfair distributor in his own cause. It is rarely, indeed, that two parties can be satisfied by the most equitable distribution of any spoil. The existence, therefore, of the alleged feeling of discontent among the manufacturing operatives, is not even *primâ facie* evidence that the discontent is well founded. Still, the opinion that it is so is so widely spread, and suggestions of plans to remedy the supposed inequitable apportionment of the profits of manufacturing industry have of late received the sanction of such high authority, that we must devote a short space to an attempt to put the matter in a practical and proper light.

The theory of the case may be thus briefly stated: —The capitalist and the workman *are*, no doubt, joint agents—co-operators—partners, in fact—in the production of a certain article (say cotton cloth), and joint sharers in the profits arising out of its sale. The capitalist supplies funds, machinery, and superintendence; the workman supplies handicraft, skill, and manual labour. At the end of the year, or of some shorter period, the net returns are to be divided between them, in a proportion either formally agreed upon, or tacitly decided by custom.

But the labourer is a poor man—he has no stores in his cupboard, and no money in his purse. He must purchase food, clothing, and shelter from day to day; and therefore cannot wait till the end of the year to receive his share of the common gain. The

capitalist, therefore, should advance to him what it is thought probable that his share will amount to—*minus*, perhaps, the interest on the advance; and, possibly, some further small deduction to compensate the risk of having over-estimated the workman's share.

But further: the results of a manufacturing enterprise are sometimes not profit but loss—always occasional loss—frequently loss for years altogether—sometimes even loss on the whole. But the workman who could not bear to wait, can still less bear his share of loss; the capitalist, therefore has to encounter all the losses, for he cannot call upon the labourer to refund the wages he has received.

The original compact (tacit or formal) by which the division of profits would have been otherwise determined, has thus become modified, *for the convenience of the workman*, into the form in which we at present see it. The workman receives his share of the profits *before* any profits are made; he receives his share in years in which no profit is made; he receives it in years when profits are changed into losses; he receives it sometimes when his master is being gradually ruined in the partnership, which—if he be but prudent—will have enriched *him*. What deductions from his original share should be made in consideration of all these predicates? It is evident that, in common justice, he cannot expect to receive as much as if he waited till profits were realised, and bore his proportion of losses when losses were incurred.

The workman's wages then, are his share of the

profits commuted into a fixed payment. This commuted share he is secure of receiving as long as the manufacturing enterprise in which he is engaged actually goes on. The capitalist alone endures all the losses, alone furnishes all the advances, alone encounters the risk of ruin, and receives only that share of profit which may remain over, after the labourer's "commuted share" is paid. The workman's share is a first mortgage, the capitalist's share is only a reversionary claim.

When these matters are duly weighed, and when, in connection with them, the history and the fluctuations of that trade, in the great centre of which the scene of "Mary Barton" is laid, are dispassionately considered, we do not believe that any man, whether operative or not, could conscientiously come to the conclusion, that the master manufacturers—abusing their advantages in the labour-market—have generally engrossed a larger proportion of profit than of right belongs to them. It is a great, though natural mistake, to think only of the masters who succeed. But we have the very recent fact before us, that in the year 1847, hundreds among them lost at one blow the earnings of many previous years of patient and plodding industry. We know how many have become bankrupts; and how many more have compounded with their creditors, during the disastrous fluctuations of the last twelve years. We have many examples, too, not only of masters who became poor, but of operatives who became rich; and stepped into the

class of masters, by savings out of their wages,—their "commuted share" of profit. (The Mr Carson of the present story is represented as one of these: we are told that he and George Wilson were at one time rival candidates for the hand of the same young woman.) We have the evidence (see the "Report of a Committee of the House of Lords upon Burdens on Land") of one of the largest Manufacturers, that the average profits of the cotton trade during the last twenty years were little more than 2½ per cent. on the capital employed. We have the fact, notorious in the manufacturing districts, that many of the wealthiest spinners are wealthy only because they annually lay by a large sum, not out of the present profits of their business, but out of the interest of their capital. And finally, we have the very significant fact, that the operatives themselves, whenever asked to specify the proportion of profit which they imagine their masters to obtain, and which they would themselves assign to them for their capital and superintendence under a co-operative system, invariably (we believe) name a far larger proportion than is actually realised, except in cases of singular good fortune. The following evidence, given some years ago by a very intelligent agitator among them, is very instructive. He was desirous that a number of workmen should combine their savings, and start a mill on their own account, on the co-operative system; and, after some conversation as to the feasibility of the scheme in its preliminary arrangements, he is asked,—

"Supposing, then, all difficulties as to capital overcome, a proper building erected, proper machinery obtained, and all contentions as to which of the co-operatives should take the best, and which the worst and most irksome labour, settled, and proper subordination obtained, there still comes the business of buying the raw material; and, next, that of selling the manufactured product;—a business, you will admit, requiring much skill, promptly applied, to guard against loss or bankruptcy. How would you that a committee should transact such business in the market?—For that business it might undoubtedly be expedient that they should select some skilful and trustworthy person.

"Who—having a large capital and the success of the undertaking in his hand, and being open to the temptations of embezzlement, or to large bribes on the betrayal of his trust,—you would perhaps think it right should be well paid, to diminish those temptations?—Certainly, I see no objections to that; he ought to be well paid.

"That being so, what would you, an operative capitalist, be willing to give to such a person for the management of your £100 share productively, for obtaining and superintending the fitting machinery, selecting and buying skilfully the raw commodity, and selling the manufactured produce, without any labour or care on your part?—I have never considered the subject in that point of view, and can hardly say; but I should think £4 or £5 a year (or 4 to 5 per cent.) would not be unreasonable. I should not object to that.

"It may surprise you, and it is well that you, and the respectable mechanics engaged in this branch of manufacture, should know, that the services spoken of is all rendered to them for one half,—now, indeed, when trade is depressed, for less than one fourth,—of that sum which you, and perhaps they, would deem a fair remuneration. That the £100 capital is furnished, the building erected, the machinery chosen and supplied, the raw material purchased, the labour in working it up directed, the markets vigilantly attended, and the sales of the manufactured article faithfully made at the best price, and without any care or thought on their parts; and that the manufacturer who does all this, is well satisfied with a remuneration of 40s. or 50s. per cent. per annum."*

* Evidence of Rowland Detrosier. First Report of Constabulary Force Commissioners, p. 156.

It is the opinion of several most able thinkers among them, as also of Mr Babbage and Mr Mill, that a better feeling would be promoted between operatives and their employers, and the interests of both materially promoted, by some arrangement which should render the former more *obviously* sharers in the profits of manufacturing enterprise, and more promptly affected by the fluctuations of those profits, than they are under the present system;—by some plan, in fact, of paying them *a portion only* of their earnings in the form of fixed wages, *as advances on account*, and the remainder at the end of the year, out of the profits when actually realised. Some of the most intelligent and benevolent of our great employers of labour, have turned their attention to the same subject,—and have even made practical experiments upon it. Now, we admit at once that such a plan, if practicable, would be most desirable for the interests of both parties; and that the master manufacturer would certainly not be the party least benefited by its adoption. We have considered all that Mr Mill has written on the subject in his recent invaluable work, with the attention due to everything which he puts forth; and with the prepossession which we always have that so profound and dispassionate a thinker must be right; and we have discussed the matter with experienced men of practice, under the sincerest desire to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. But we are obliged to declare that the difficulties of the scheme seem to us insuperable.

The legal impediments we pass over at once, because

these are remediable by legislation. But a practical difficulty meets us *in limine*. If the workmen already receive in the form of wages their full and due proportion of the common gain—and we have expressed our conviction that this is the case—then it is evident that they can only become sharers in the distribution of the annual profits, by foregoing a portion of their present fixed salaries. They must receive their share of the profits *in lieu of, not in addition to,* the whole or a part of their weekly wages. The first step to the proposed arrangement must, therefore, be an immediate reduction of the weekly payment to the workmen. Now, the men who would submit to such a diminution of their present certain earnings, for the sake of a fluctuating and uncertain, though, it might be, larger, addition to their future receipts, we believe to be few indeed. Under these circumstances, the objection to the conversion of the operatives from the condition of salaried servants to that of real partners, would, we are convinced, come from the operatives themselves.

In the second place,—supposing this first difficulty to be surmounted,—what must be done in years of loss, especially when those years of loss occur two or three in succession? These years of manufacturing losses are generally years of a high price of food. Under a partnership system, therefore, the operative would find himself with diminished earnings and increased expenditure, aggravated by the proportion of loss which, at the end of the year, would fall to his share, and which —as he would probably have no means of meeting it—

must remain as a debt due from him to his employer, to be repaid when profitable years recurred. The repayment of this debt, which would come before him in this naked form, viz. that his master was realising large profits whilst he was gaining nothing, but simply obliterating an old debt, would create endless dissatisfaction and ill-will; and would, we are certain, lead to a far worse state of feeling between the parties than exists at present. Moreover, it is to be doubted whether the substitution of fluctuating and uncertain for regular earnings, would not rather tend to promote a spirit of gambling and improvidence. We fear that the partnership system demands a degree of moral and social progress, which our manufacturing population, clever and intelligent as they are, are yet far from having attained.

In the third place, the plan could not be made to *work*. Putting aside the difficulties which would arise in the case we have supposed, of a workman in debt to his master, perhaps for years together, and the consequent disputes and recriminations which could scarcely fail to arise as to who was responsible for the bad success of the undertaking;—passing over the discouragement of the workman, and his constant temptation to cancel his debt by changing his master, we must not forget, when we come to regard the question with a view to practice, that a factory employs on an average about 500 workpeople. Of these many are *floating*, come and go as the whim seizes them; some remaining a few months, others only a few weeks. How

could *their* interests be fairly arranged on the partnership plan? Then, several of the people are careless, lazy, or drunken, and require to be summarily dismissed. But how could you dismiss men who have a reserved claim on the profits of the concern?

It is, no doubt, quite possible, and even easy, to give to some of *the principal workmen* employed in factories, the foremen of the various departments, for example, a certain per centage of the yearly profits, in addition to their fixed salary. And this is a plan by no means unfrequently adopted by employers for the sake of stimulating the care and zeal of those on whom so much depends. But even in these cases, though the men are select and highly educated in comparison with their fellows, no attempt is ever made, we believe, to make them sharers in *losses* as well as in gains. The share they receive is simply an additional salary or bonus, given when the business is profitable; is, in fact, neither more nor less than an advance in wages, withdrawn when the capitalist can no longer afford to give it.

On the whole, therefore, we incline to the belief that the present system of commuting the workman's share of the common profits into a fixed weekly stipend, though not, perhaps, theoretically the most perfect, is, at least, the one which, under the circumstances, is the most beneficial to him, and the only one which is at present practicable. If it does not give him the same interest in his work which a formal partnership might do, it secures to him regular and ample earnings; and

greatly tends to evade that heart-burning animosity and those perpetual disputes, which any other arrangement could scarcely fail to produce.* Under it, we are satisfied that the workman *does* receive his fair share, if not more than his fair share, of the profits actually realised; and if he expends them with a due regard to economy, he will in a few years—as a general rule—be able to amass a sum which would enable him to become a capitalist while remaining a workman,—and thus realise some of the benefits of both conditions.

The introduction of the continental law which permits partnerships *en commandite*, as they are called, or partnerships with limited liability on the part of the inferior shareholders, would greatly facilitate this result. We quote Mr Mill's account of this law.

"The other kind of limited partnership which demands our attention, is that in which the managing partner or partners are responsible, with their whole fortunes, for the engagements of the concern, but have others associated with them who contribute only definite sums, and are not liable for anything beyond, though they participate in the profits according to any rule that may be agreed upon. This is called partnership *en commandite;* and the partners with limited liability, to whom, by the French law; all interference in the management of the concern is interdicted, are called *commanditaires.* Such partner-

* It must be noticed that most of the workmen in factories have already a direct interest in the work, arising from being paid by *the work done*, not by the *day*.

ships are not permitted by the English law; whoever shares in the profits is liable for the debts to as plenary an extent as the managing partner. For such prohibition no rational defence has ever, so far as I am aware, been made."—*Mill's Pol. Econ.*, vol. ii. p. 465.*

* Since this was written, legal difficulties have been removed, and the co-operative principle not only in distributive but in productive industry, has been largely tried, in some cases, and in short prosperous times, with encouraging success; but of late with many most unfortunate results which at once illustrate the warnings given above, and show how far the mass of the artisans are yet from possessing either the intellectual or moral preparation for the successful working of the undertakings in question.

We quote accounts of a few recent occurrences, the not unfriendly comments appended to which may be studied with profit.

THE OUSEBURN ENGINE WORKS.

"It is not without some feeling of regret that we record the breakdown of another interesting and apparently promising experiment in what is called Industrial Co-operation. We have never regarded this system as in any degree likely to fulfil the exaggerated promises made by its advocates; but we have seen in it a means of that self-education in the economics of industry which our working classes so greatly need. The circular issued last week to the shareholders of the Ouseburn Engine Works Company, Limited, records the entire failure and collapse of that most celebrated experiment. Mr J. H. Rutherford records as the result of the trade of the past twelve months, the fourth year of the Company, a loss of £10,862 on the manufacturing account, of £225 on the iron foundry, of £176 on the brass foundry, and on the coppersmiths' shop a loss of £149. Against this loss is a profit of £549 on the forge shop, leaving a balance against the concern of nearly £11,000. To this loss on the actual operations of manufacture must be added bad debts amounting to over £8000. The total of the year's trading represents, therefore, a deficit of nearly £20,000. This loss, moreover, has been incurred in spite of the fact that a good repairing and jobbing business has been done, which during the year has amounted to £24,232, yielding a profit of £4,131.

We have already, we fear, overstepped our limits, and with one or two remarks more, we will conclude.

"Mary Barton" is called a tale of Manchester life; its scenes are principally laid there, and its characters

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We presume that this profit has gone in trade expenses, and that it has, in fact, been sunk. Instead, therefore, of having to count this as a set-off to the £20,000, we presume that it must be added to it. The profit made in one department has in fact been swallowed up in others, and twenty thousand pounds more. We are not told how this failure has been brought about. There is, however, one most significant paragraph in Mr Rutherford's circular to which the attention of the whole industrial world will, we hope, be directed. Mr Rutherford says, 'at the commencement of the working year, though we had old contracts to finish and new contracts could only be booked at a great reduction in price, the workmen insisted on a rise of ten per cent. in the rate of wages, which we were wholly powerless to prevent.' Mr Rutherford does not say how far this demand, enforced as it was in the face of a falling market and an unprofitable trade, contributed to the disaster he now announces. But it will probably constitute the one sign which the shareholders will regard as showing the hopelessness of the undertaking. Mr Rutherford's scheme of reconstruction asks for sacrifices from the shareholders on behalf of workmen who have been thus inconsiderate in their demands. There is very little likelihood of any response being made to the appeal. That ten per cent. will discourage even the enthusiastic co-operators who have already invested their money in the Company, and they will probably think it best to wind it up and confess that, in the present condition of feeling among workmen, industrial co-operation is a failure.

"We have no interest in the proposals which Mr Rutherford makes to the shareholders. It will be noted, however, as the one point in which the public outside have any concern, that Mr Rutherford makes the curious admission that 'the system of compulsory deposit, though founded on sound principles, has, in the opinion of the manager and foremen, increased the cost of production.' But this system of compulsory deposit, by which every person employed has an actual investment in the capital, is the

—masters and men—are manufacturers. But the fearful contrasts between rich and poor, which it is the great object of the story to depict and darken, together with the moral lessons which the delineations are in-

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essence of the co-operative principle. It is the process by which the workmen are to buy the works which employ them. It is the scheme by means of which every man is to become his own capitalist. Mr Rutherford admits that it has 'increased the cost of production,' though he still thinks it sound in principle. How a scheme which comes out as an inevitable failure, by 'increasing the cost of production,' can be founded on sound principles we are at a loss to understand. Mr Rutherford, however, proposes to abandon it, sound as it is. One of the heads of his suggestions for reconstruction is, 'that the system of compulsory deposit be abolished, and voluntary deposits substituted.' The society is, in fact, to become an ordinary limited liability company, in which workmen may buy shares if they will save the money for the purpose. Whatever, therefore, may result from the circular just sent out, the abandonment of the co-operative principle is complete. Whether the appeal to the shareholders for more money—'if you would save your business and property'—is, or is not, responded to, the Ouseburn Engine Works Company is none the less a complete failure as a co-operative institution, and once more illustrates what we said in commenting on the sad break-down of the great experiment made by Messrs Henry Briggs, Son, & Co., six months ago, that the working classes are really blind to their own interests, and prefer a small present gain, even though it entails great future loss, to any patient labour to lay by for coming years.

"This failure at the Ouseburn Works is the more conspicuous from the fact that for some few years past the advocates of industrial co-operation have constantly spoken of it as the great proof of the success of their principle. Many of the distributive co-operative societies, which seem to succeed because Unionism never troubles them, have invested their gains in these works, and very serious loss will thus fall on many deserving working men all over the kingdom. The Ouseburn experiment has, however, never fairly succeeded. It started with immense advantages in 1871, just after the Newcastle strike of that year. It began by purchas-

tended to convey, have long been common to town and country. The chasm which separates the employer and the employed, is at least as wide, we apprehend, in Dorsetshire as in Lancashire. Lazarus lies at the gate

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ing a splendid property at a price which at the enhanced values of all such works at the end of the first year, at once gave them a profit of some £10,000. They had some four hundred of the best workmen in Newcastle, and orders to the amount of £100,000 were booked in the first year. These contracts, however, were at prices which the rapid rise in values in 1873 made unprofitable, and there was a heavy loss in that year. The Company seems never to have recovered this loss; and probably the inconsiderate demand of the workmen for a ten per cent. rise in wages a year ago was the last straw which broke the Company's back. We had occasion to point out in last October, when commenting upon Mr Rutherford's statement at the Newcastle Co-operative Congress in reference to the Ouseburn Works, how workmen are content in all industrial organisations to profit by a rising market, but that they refuse to accept the diminished wages rendered needful by falling prices. Their notion of industrial co-operation is 'Heads, I win; tails, you lose.' But in this case we actually have a losing business in which the workmen shareholders insist on an increase of their wages. Such blindness destroys all hope, at present, of the success of any large scheme of industrial co-operation. In its distributive aspects co-operation succeeds because it is not brought in contact with these demands for higher wages. It simply buys of producers, and distributes in retail fashion goods thus bought at wholesale prices. But as soon as co-operators begin to be themselves producers, they run up the price of production in such a way that no margin of profit is left. The directors of such a society are, in Mr Rutherford's pathetic words, 'wholly powerless to prevent' demands for a rise in wages, and those demands will be made and enforced entirely apart from any ability of the business to bear the increased drain. Individual employers are not 'wholly powerless to prevent' such inconsiderate and injurious demands, and it is their ability and determination to resist which is the salvation of trade. We commend this striking instance to the consideration of those public men who side with the Trade Unions even in their most incon-

of Dives in both places—by the park pailings of the squire, as well as on the hall steps of the cotton lord—and the temptations and provocations—the seeds out of which Esthers and John Bartons grow—undoubtedly

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siderate demands. But for the resistance of employers of labour to such wrong-headedness, the whole business of the country would long ago have gone the way of the Ouseburn Engine Works. We regret the failure for the moral weakness it reveals among picked men of the working class. Co-operation, to succeed, needs a self-restraint these men have not yet got. This disaster may be one lesson to them of its need, and may do something to induce them to acquire it; but meanwhile the very life of our industry depends on the power of its chiefs to prevent the workmen from killing the goose that lays the golden eggs by forcing up the cost of production till nothing can be produced."

CO-OPERATIVE FAILURES.

"Co-operative industrial companies, however successful in many forms, seem doomed to perish when touched by Union labour. This promising plant refuses to grow under the hot breath of Trade Unionism. The lapse of the liberal scheme of Messrs Briggs in the Methwood Collieries was brought about by the Unionist colliers themselves, who declared their preference for the common lot of their Union to a co-operative system which gave them a full share of all the profits of capital without any liability for its losses; and they acted so persistently on this preference that the co-operative arrangement had to be abandoned. Last week we had occasion to refer to the sad issue of the Ouseburn Engine Works, at Newcastle, of which for a time better things had been anticipated, and of which the *Scotsman* has since remarked with some point that it owed its birth to a strike, and it found its death in substantially the same cause. When the company was entering on a losing trade, as the directors have frankly admitted, the workmen demanded an advance of 10 per cent. in the rate of wages; and since the demand was made upon themselves as shareholders, of course there was nothing to resist it. But this free and easy style of settling the rate of wages, without respect to the source from which the wages had to come, or the means by

abound in both, though not perhaps quite to the same extent. We cannot need a Crabbe to come again to tell us this. There was nothing in the extremity of their Manchester destitution, which the Davenports,

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which they were to be earned, had the result of rendering what would probably have been in any case, for a year or two, an unprofitable trade, a source of loss fatal to the existence of the company. The consequences have been very deplorable. The workmen have not only lost the savings they had invested in the concern and their employment at the same time, or in other words, both their capital and labour, but some of them, as we regret to hear, have been left with considerable wages' bills unpaid, for which they have been solicited to take shares in what is practically a defunct interest!

"There is now another case of failure, viz., the Co-operative Mining Society, having its head-quarters also in Newcastle-on-Tyne, which is, if anything, still more significant of an inherent Trade Union incapacity for serious co-operative business; because, far from working men alone being responsible for the disaster, there is a body of directors in whose judgment working men might have reasonable confidence. The Co-operative Mining Society, among the directors of which there is not only Dr Rutherford, who also figures prominently in the Ouseburn Engine Works, but Mr Burt, M.P., Mr Crawford, and other gentlemen of skill and responsibility, appears to have purchased two years ago, with money contributed in shares by the working miners, the Monkwood and Barlow Lees Collieries in Derbyshire, on what was believed to be very favourable terms. The total share capital was £35,559. This sum was inadequate to buy the collieries, and the company entered on the working with a balance of purchase-money to the amount of £43,000 due to Mr Plevins, the former proprietor. The company raised debenture loans to the amount of £3189, and it has a mortgage debt to the amount of £1415. The mine was also subject to a royalty of £2530. The first year's operations appear to have yielded a trifling profit, but in the second year the profit and loss account has shown a deficiency of £11,010, which the gain of the previous year only reduces to £10,863. In other words, a third of the whole subscribed capital

immigrants from Buckinghamshire, are described as dreading so much, as to be sent back to their rural home.

Some improbabilities, too, take off considerably from

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has been lost. The directors in this dilemma now allege that in the purchase the output capacity of the collieries was exaggerated, and in these circumstances they have entered into a Chancery suit for the annulling of the contract, which is probably the most unwise thing they could have done; because £43,000 of the contract with Mr Plevins is unpaid, and he can rescind his contract, or resume his property at any time; and the more the directors prove in Chancery that the property is not nearly worth the purchase-money, the less power they will have of selling it to any advantage, or of doing anything else than surrender to Mr Plevins. It is almost incredible that a company under the guidance of such directors as we have named should have fallen into a pit of this kind in so short a time. A meeting of the company is to be held this week, at which 'unanimity of action' is much desired by the committee of management; but if the statement of the *Newcastle Daily Journal*, that £9000 of the company's money is already locked up in the Chancery suit, be correct, the prospects of the shareholders must be unsatisfactory in the last degree.

"The constant failure of Co-operative enterprise in the hands of Trade Unionists and their particular patrons and friends is a fact of the times worthy of consideration. Trade Unionists profess to know so distinctly what the rate of wages and the profits of capital should be, that it might almost be assumed that to place them at the head of any industrial business, with both labour and capital under their complete control, could do nothing less than ensure them uninterrupted prosperity and general happiness. On the contrary, a Co-operative company is no sooner formed under Trade Union auspices than it begins to fall into difficulty, and eventually into ruin. The Unionists are not content to have the profits of capital with its losses; and when they have a share of the profits of capital without any share of its losses they are equally restive, and appear to imagine that there is something much better in store for them. The conduct of arduous and self-

our pleasure in these volumes. We cannot believe that the long coquetting of the heroine, Mary Barton, a weaver's daughter, and apprenticed to a milliner, with Henry Carson, a young master manufacturer, and one

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denying business to people of this character is impossible. Their great passion, and indeed their one idea, is to strike for more and more wages; and so dominant is this propensity that when they are members of a co-operative company, they strike against themselves, and demand more wages out of their own capital, even when nothing is being earned by the concern. Co-operation thus perishes when it comes in contact with the Trade Union principle. On the other hand, it lives and flourishes and has many beneficent results, when there is no Trade Unionism in the case, and when it is taken up by people of a different character, and of more practical ideas. If we look at what Trade Unionists commonly think or commonly do, or attempt to do,—at what, in short, is their common habit both of mind and action,—there will probably be found sufficient reason for this remarkable fact in the history of co-operative enterprise. The Trade Unionists greatly exaggerate the profits of capital, and they take no account of its losses. They look at the principle of wealth, but they know nothing of the interest derived from it. They see a great establishment in which they work and toil—a large furniture of machinery, buildings, and money contributing to their employment—and they see the external comfort and luxury in which the owners of all this property live. On the other hand, they are totally blind to the self-denial, the pains, the long train of skill and application, by which this edifice of wealth under which they work and toil was built up; and they are equally blind to the fact that their employers, while sometimes making profits, and even large profits, are at other times living not on profits, but on capital, and yet at the same time maintaining labour, and disbursing the wages of unproductive labour. The Trade Unionist's idea, under this imperfect and one-sided view of what he sees superficially around him, is simply to increase his wages, whatever the circumstances may be. Men of this stamp will never conduct business successfully either for themselves or as members of a co-operative company. Their sole object is to increase their ease and means

of the beaux of Manchester—still less her long ill-usage of her rough and faithful lover, Jem Wilson, and her sudden and passionate devotion to him—are con-

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at a leap; and, when opportunity allows, they either slacken their efforts or eat up the capital, or both. A curious illustration of this line of remark is furnished by a letter which appears in another column from a Liverpool working man, whose expressed opinions will lose none of their force and worth from the homely and picturesque language in which they are given."

CO-OPERATION IN LANCASHIRE.

"The first danger to co-operative production in Lancashire seems to arise from the fact that it has passed beyond the bounds suitable to the ideas and interests of the working man proper. The model of a co-operative mill or factory is that where the operatives have subscribed necessary capital, and where, obtaining on an humble scale of remuneration the service of skilful managers who have a share in the capital with themselves, they have the means, under their own inspection, and by their own assiduity, of working out not only their wages, but the highest profits of their capital. This appears to have been the original type of co-operative cotton mills in Lancashire, and it had favourable results, such as the production of good and honest material—placing them in this respect on an equality with private firms of old and high repute—and a considerable profit on their capital over and above their wages as labourers. But a success of this kind was sure to be contagious, and co-operative mills began to be established, for which the capital was drawn in small shares from a hundred various sources. The operative on wages in one mill took a share or two in one of the co-operative mills in which he had no part as a workman; masons, joiners, and other workmen did the same; the small shopkeeper, the retired tradesman, everybody who had £5 or £10 to invest, followed suit. There is nothing whatever wrong in this flow and intercommunication of capital as long as the essential conditions of prosperity in the kind of works to which the capital is given are strictly observed; but it follows that the more this speculative investment in new co-operative mills has been pursued, their original features have been lost or greatly defaced, and hence

sistent with the sense and spirit all along attributed to her. And though there are many forms in which the devil "out of our weakness and our melancholy,

has arisen a form of mania under which production in any particular groove, such as cotton fabrics, may very soon exceed all practicable bounds either of decent wages or of any profit on capital. This probable excess of cotton-fabric production is corrected in some measure by the fact that the new companies have, in many instances, been only taking up the works of previously existing private firms.

"The second danger of these co-operative mills in Lancashire arises from the great extent to which they are working on borrowed money. It is not unusual, it seems, for the working capital to be composed one-third of shares and two-thirds of loans. The more the share capital is kept down, and the larger the capital employed consists of borrowed money at five or even six per cent., the dividend on the shares in prosperous times is likely to be all the more considerable. But it is regretful to find the working classes in these co-operative movements falling into the gross error of Stock-Exchange investors, in looking much more to immediate dividends than to the permanent security of the capital invested, and which error, on the narrow base of capital they have to operate upon, must be much more disastrous to them than it has ever been to the more wealthy classes. There may be some mitigation of this evil in the fact that the loans are largely supplied from the reserved funds of the large co-operative store companies, one of which—the Industrial Co-operative Society—is reported to be so rich as to have £45,000 of money placed in loans to the co-operative manufacturing companies. It may thus often happen from the large extent to which the savings of the working classes in districts of Lancashire have taken this form of co-operative investment, that the shareholders of a company that borrow may be the shareholders of another company that lends, and that in the one form, if not in both, they are sure of some return for their money. Yet the situation is somewhat hazardous, and it is a mistake to carry on a manufacturing business on a large proportion of borrowed capital; because a crisis may arise in which the lending company may desire to call up its loans when it is impossible or inconvenient for the borrowing companies to pay them, or when they are even seeking

abuses us to damn us," we do not think that the manly and tender nature of John Barton should have been made answerable for his perdition. But in con-

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to borrow more; and a disaster on both sides may be thus produced,

"On the whole, the shrewdness and the success with which the Lancashire operatives have hitherto developed the co-operative principle, both in its distributive and productive forms, give good reason to hope that they will give the system prominence, and that by revising and correcting their proceedings in the same wise spirit in which they have begun, they will succeed in gradually expelling elements of danger from the institutions they have been founding. In the present unhappy strike of cotton operatives at Oldham, which has occurred, to use the words of *The Times*, 'more through an imperfect faculty of calculating wages than anything else,' an attempt to bring the Co-operative Mill Companies under Trade Union influence has entirely failed; and this may be received as a sign among many others that the working-classes are becoming sick and distrustful of Trade Union tactics, in which there is not only 'great cry and little wool,' but absolutely loss of wool, both in time and wages. The Lancashire operatives are reading, by practical experiments, a very useful lesson to the whole Trade Union body, and to the working-classes in general. The struggles for one shilling more wages or for an hour less work in the week sink into utter insignificance beside this great and praiseworthy effort of working men to contribute to, and share in the profits of, this capital by which they are employed. This effort may have its successes or its failures. But all must wish it success; and, if the working men engaged in these operations do not yield to too great a desire of gain, or to exaggerated views of the profits of capital, a large amount of success may be reasonably and confidently anticipated. In any case, the process itself will be a valuable practical education of the working classes, and will raise up multitudes of operatives understanding both sides of the question, and in the best sense of the term men of business—men, in short, who 'know a hawk from a handsaw,' and who will give short shrift to the delusions and hatreds which have been too freely fomented of late among the working-classes."

cluding, we must again express our sense of the surpassing literary merit of the work, and our conviction also, that both its value and its chance of lasting popularity would have been far greater, had the writer endeavoured to represent the real position of the operative classes, rather than the inaccurate and distorted view of that position, as taken by the sour and envious among them; had she, while depicting the distress and privation which they are so often called upon to endure, drawn attention also to those intellectual and moral deficiencies by which this distress is so often caused or aggravated; had she dealt out one measure of kindliness and severity to the rich and poor; and had she spoken of the bitter and malignant feelings she has dramatised, less as sharing and excusing them, than as perceiving and deploring their injustice. We yield to none in a hearty appreciation of, indeed a fellow-feeling with, the *workers* in every country and of every denomination; but we would show that sympathy—not in idly mourning over sorrows which are common to all ranks, nor in weeping at distresses for which, as for all human evils, there is a compensation and a cure, but—by calling on all our fellow-labourers to brace up their souls for sterner endurance and for harder exertion; by exhorting them to carry with them through all trials, as their sword and shield, the settled faith that they, and no man else, must do their own work; that the blessings of comfort, independence, and security, are not to be mendicated from others, but to be achieved for them-

selves; that these inestimable blessings are the promised and the sure rewards of steady industry, of resolute frugality, of reflection that "looks before and after;" that, in fine—to quote the language of a great poet—neither the humble nor the powerful must stoop to ask at the hands of others—

> "A gift of that which is not to be *given*,
> By all the blended powers of earth and heaven."

1849.

ENGLISH SOCIALISM.

GENIUS, which is always welling up in copious streams from the great field of humanity, flows in different channels at different eras. In early times it took a warlike form, and the men of genius were conquerors and heroes. In later ages, as the world grew more pacific, and the relations of society more complex, the art of government became more important than the art of conquest, and the men of genius were statesmen and civilians. At other times the development of genius gave birth in predominating measure to painters and poets, who transferred to their canvas or their pages those graceful forms and exquisite imaginations which became to art the models of eternal beauty. The superb achievements of which human intellect is capable have in recent years chiefly shown themselves in the sphere of physical science, and in the application of scientific discoveries to the furtherance of material civilization; and natural philosophers and engineers have been the real poets (ποιηταί, *makers* or *doers*) and wonder-workers of our day. And now, when almost every desideratum in this line which imagination can conceive is either supplied, or in the way of being so —when turf is being made into candles, and water into gas—when the Isthmus of Panama is about to be

cut through, and Paris and London are united by continuous wires—when we travel with the speed of wings, and communicate with the speed of light—it does seem as if the time were come for genius to find a new field for its development and display; and there are many hopeful indications that the same glorious faculty which has reaped harvests of enduring laurels in most other departments, is about to take up the case of man himself. The time is come for the leading spirits to devote themselves, heart and soul, to the solution of those perilous enigmas of life which have so long formed our perplexity and our despair, and to the cure of those social anomalies which darken the fair face of the modern world, and make us feel, sadly and humbly, how imperfect and partial is the civilization we exult in. It cannot be that the same intellect —which has wrung from nature her most hidden secrets, which has triumphed over the most gigantic material obstructions, which has "exhausted worlds and then imagined new," which has discovered and described laws operating in regions of space, separated from us by a distance so vast that human imagination cannot picture it, and arithmetical language can hardly express it—should not, when fairly applied to social and administrative science, be competent to rectify our errors, and to smooth our path; unless, indeed, society take refuge in the dreary creed, which never shall be ours, that the problem before us is insoluble and the wretchedness around us inherent and incurable.

"If this were so," says Mr Mill,—"if the bulk of

the human race are always to remain as at present, slaves to toil in which they *have* no interest, and therefore *feel* no interest—drudging from early morning till late at night for bare necessaries, and with all the intellectual and moral deficiencies which this implies—without interests or sentiments as members of society, and with a sense of injustice rankling in their minds, equally for what they have not and for what others have,—I know not what there is which should make a person with any capacity of reason concern himself about the destinies of the human race. There would be no wisdom for any one, but in extracting from life, with epicurean indifference, as much personal satisfaction for himself and those with whom he sympathises, as it can yield without injury to anyone, and let the unmeaning bustle of so-called civilised existence roll by unheeded. But there is no ground for such a view of human affairs." There is a far greater probability of truth in a remark we once heard from Dr Chalmers,—"that the world is so constituted that if we were morally right we should be physically happy;" and that all our sufferings and evils (so far as they exceed those inseparable from a finite and imperfect nature) may be traced to ignorance or neglect of those laws of nature which God has established for our good and has displayed for our instruction. We agree with the Socialists in holding that the world can never have been intended to be, and will not long remain, what it is. The apparent contradiction between the vast amount of unrelieved misery and the vast amount of energetic

benevolence now existing in our country, which strikes so many with despair, inspires us, on the contrary, with the most sanguine hopes; because, in that benevolence, we see ample means of remedying nearly all our evils—means hitherto impotent and unavailing solely because misapplied. There is now, more than ever before, an adequate knowledge of the ills which are to be battled with and conquered; there is energy without stint or limit waiting, panting to be let loose upon it; there are agents without number only anxious to be shown how they can do good, without at the same time doing a more than counterbalancing amount of evil,—sometimes, alas! *not* waiting for this guidance; and there is money ready to flow in the most liberal abundance for the furtherance of any scheme which promises to relieve want or to assist exertion. All that is needed is the wisdom to direct this vast machinery for good, and a strong conviction on the part of the public that, unless it can be placed under the guidance of sound principle, it must be mischievous and not beneficent. This great lesson is at length beginning to be learned.

There are two classes of philanthropists — the feelers and the thinkers—the impulsive and the systematic—those who devote themselves to the relief or the mitigation of existing misery, and those who, with a longer patience, a deeper insight, and a wider vision, endeavour to prevent its recurrence and perpetuation by an investigation and eradication of its causes. The former—in imitation, as they imagine,

of their Master—go from house to house assuaging momentary wretchedness, but alas ! not always "doing good ;" relieving present evils, but too often leaving an increasing crop ever springing up under their footsteps ; attended and rewarded by blessings, but doomed, probably, at length to feel that they have ill deserved them. Far different is the course of the latter class : their life is spent in a laborious research into remote and hidden causes ; in a patient and painful analysis of the operation of principles from the misapplication or forgetfulness of which our social disorders have for the most part sprung ; in sowing seeds and elucidating laws that are to destroy the evil at a distant date, which they themselves may never see,—by which sometimes its pressure may be aggravated during the period which they do see. They are neither rewarded by the gratitude of those for whom they toil—since the benefits they confer are often blessings in disguise and *in futurum ;*—nor gratified by beholding the fruit of their benevolent exertions—for the harvest may not be ripe till all of them have passed away and till most of them have been forgotten. Nay, more, they are misrepresented, misconstrued, accused of hardness of heart by a misconceiving generation, and too often cursed and thwarted by the very men in whose service they have spent their strength. And while those who have chosen the simpler and easier path are reaping blessings in return for the troubles they have ignorantly stimulated and perpetuated by relieving, these men—the true martyrs of philanthropy

—must find their consolation and support in unswerving adherence to sound principles and unshrinking faith in final victory, and must seek their recompense —if they need one—in the tardy recognition of their virtues by a distant and a wiser time. While therefore the warm and ardent natures, which can find no peace except in the free indulgence of their kindly impulses, are worthy of all love, and even, amid all the mischief they create, of some admiration for their sacrifices and zeal—and while we fully admit that they also may have a mission to fulfil—we cast in our lot with their more systematic fellow-labourers who address themselves to the harder, rougher, more unthankful task, of attacking the source rather than the symptoms—of eradicating social evils rather than alleviating them.

We can, however, sympathise keenly with those excellent women—and those kind-hearted men cast in somewhat the same mould—who ask, "Are we, then, to sit by with folded hands, and listen to the groans and gaze upon the misery around us, till political and economic science—which we confess our incompetence to understand—has discovered and established the systems and institutions which will in time rectify the world? Are we to do nothing, lest we should sow some tares among our wheat—lest in doing good we should do some harm also?" By no means. There is an ample field for every species of benevolence: and for this very numerous and most valuable class of philanthropists, the investigation and assistance of

individual cases of difficulty and distress is the appropriate path. If, instead of miscellaneous charity, which is at once so easy and so injurious, and instead of liberal subscriptions to charitable institutions, which are so often misdirected and misconducted, they would take two or three struggling individuals, or two or three destitute families, under their special charge, thoroughly examine into their condition and its causes, aid them to escape from it or to mitigate its hardships, and put them in the way of an attainable livelihood, they would find that such a course might cost them more trouble, it is true, but less money; and they would assuredly soon acquire the conviction that they had done more real good, and conferred more lasting happiness, than they could have brought about by ten times the outlay in subscriptions,—at the same time, that at all events, the service they had done will be unalloyed. The Governess' Benevolent Institution we believe to be one of the most useful, praise-worthy, and best-conducted that exists, and least open to economic criticism; but, supposing each lady who, in the course of her life, subscribes £100 to its funds and spends days in canvassing, personally or by-letter, for an extension of its benefits to some favoured *protégée*, were to keep her eye fixed upon two or three individual governesses instead! Let her aid them in their struggles, advise them in their difficulties, comfort them in their distress, take them in for a period when they want a home, and, if they needed (which, in case the surveillance had been judicious and

effective, they seldom would), console them with a small pension in their age :—would not the aggregate number of cases thus relieved, and the aggregate of happiness thus conferred, be far greater and far surer than by the present system ? To make our meaning clearer, we will quote from "Alton Locke" a case of heart-rending distress ; which, though in a work of fiction, we fear was at the time deplorably too near the truth :—

"There was no bed in the room,—no table. It was bare of furniture, comfortless, and freezing cold ; but, with the exception of the plaster dropping from the roof, and the broken windows patched with rags and paper, there was a scrupulous neatness about the whole which contrasted strangely with the filth and slovenliness outside. On a broken chair by the chimney sat a miserable old woman, fancying that she was warming her hands over embers that had long been cold, and muttering to herself, with palsied lips, about the guardians and the workhouse ; while upon a few rags on the floor lay a girl, ugly, marked with small-pox, hollow-eyed, emaciated,—her only bed-clothes the skirt of a large handsome new riding-habit, at which two other girls, wan and tawdry, were stitching busily as they sat right and left of her on the floor. The old woman took no notice of us as we entered ; but one of the girls looked up, and with a pleased gesture of recognition, put her finger on her lips, and whispered 'Ellen's asleep.'

"'I am not asleep, dears,' answered a faint, unearthly voice ; 'I was only praying. Is that Mr Mackaye ?'

"'Aye, my lasses ; but ha' ye gotten na fire the nicht ?'

"'No,' said one of them bitterly, 'we've earned no fire to-night by fair trade, or foul either.'

"I saw Mackaye slip something into the hand of one of the girls, and whisper 'A half hundred weight of coals ;' to which she replied with an eager look of gratitude I can never forget, and hurried out. Then the sufferer, as if taking advantage of her absence, began to speak quickly and hurriedly.

"'Oh, Mr Mackaye,—dear kind Mr Mackaye,—do speak to her,

and do speak to poor Lizzy here! I'm not afraid to sa before her, because she is more gentle-like, and hasn't learnt to say bad words yet; but do speak to them, and tell them not to go the bad way, like all the rest. Tell them it 'll never prosper. I know it's want that drives them to it, as it drives all of us,—but tell them it's best to starve and die honest girls, than to go about with the shame and the curse of God on their hearts for the sake of keeping this vile, poor, miserable body together for a few short years more in this world of sorrow. . . . . For Lizzy here, I did hope she had repented of it after all my talking to her; but since I've been so bad, and the girls have had to keep me most of the time, she's gone out o' nights just as bad as ever.'

"Lizzy had hid her face in her hands the greater part of this speech. Now she looked up passionately,—almost fiercely:—

"'Repent!—I have repented,—I repent of it every hour: I hate myself, and hate all the world because of it; but I must—I must: I cannot see her starve, and I cannot starve myself. When she first fell sick she kept on as long as she could, doing what she could; and then between us we only earned three shillings a week: . . . and now Ellen can't work at all; and there's four of us with the old lady to keep off two's work that couldn't keep themselves alone.'

"At this moment the other girl entered with the coals. 'We have been telling Mr Mackaye everything,' said poor Lizzy.

"'A pleasant story, isn't it? Oh! if that fine lady, as we're making this riding-habit for, would just spare half the money that goes in dressing her up to ride in the park, to send us out to the colonies, wouldn't I be an honest girl there? May be an honest man's wife! Oh my God! wouldn't I slave my fingers to the bone for him! wouldn't I mend my life there! It 'ud be like getting into heaven out of hell. But now we must—we must, I tell you.'

"And she sat down and began stitching frantically at the riding-habit, from which the other girl had hardly lifted her eyes or hands for a moment during our visit."

Now the question we wish our readers to ask themselves is this: If each lady or gentleman, whose soul is harrowed by hearing of such wretchedness as is here pictured, instead of rushing wildly to join or to found

a society for sending distressed needlewomen out of the country by wholesale, would *take in hand some one individual case*, relieve the momentary want, search into the causes which have led to it, give these poor girls temporary work, put them in the way of regular employment, and, if found desirable, aid them, by private and careful benevolence, to reach the colonies, —would not the amount of misery assuaged and prevented be not only infinitely greater, but the good done incalculably more unalloyed? To be sure, the one method is easy and immediate, the other would be laborious, might be slow; the one is public, the other private and unostentatious; but if done in secret, we are told it shall be rewarded openly. We are far from wishing to discourage combined benevolence: we do not for a moment mean to maintain that all charitable associations are unsound in their basis and noxious in their operation. What we desire to inculcate is this: that those whose feelings are too vivid, whose judgment is too impatient, or whose reasoning faculties are too untrained, *to allow them to study philanthropy as a science*, have no business with charity on a great scale, and cannot safely deal with *institutions* which are engines of immense good or immense evil, according as they harmonise with or violate those principles of economical philosophy, to the investigation of which these parties confess themselves, by temperament or by capacity, inadequate. With such powerful instruments none should have anything to do whose feelings are too quick and vehement

to leave their heads clear; and it is not from those who read much and see a little of particular forms and scenes of misery—whose eyes are suddenly opened, by such revelations as the press has lately poured forth, to the existence of an abyss of wretchedness of which, till now, they had never dreamed,—who are dazzled with the flood of darkness let in upon them,—and who have no experience to sober their conclusions and no previous knowledge to mitigate their horror,—that a comprehensive and unexaggerated judgment can be looked for. It is not from men whom the endurance or the spectacle of suffering has driven frantic, that cool deliberation, needful caution, or wise and salutary action can be hoped.

A pamphlet which appeared some years since, entitled "Cheap Clothes and Nasty," is a proof of this. It is well known to proceed from the pen of Mr Kingsley, a clergyman of the Church of England, a zealous and experienced parish priest, a gentleman of great literary ability, of very impatient benevolence, and evidently of somewhat imperious and aggressive temper towards all who would check his hasty conclusions, or proceed by a different path to the attainment of a common end.* His feelings were strongly excited by Mr Mayhew's letters in the "Morning Chronicle;" and, as he himself states, he incontinently became demented, and put forth a tract full of raving wholly unworthy

* I must remind my readers that these sharp criticisms were written five and twenty years ago, when Mr Kingsley was in the prime of life.

of his scholarship and station, and containing much abuse of the economists, who so far, after all, are only philanthropists more sober, thoughtful, and wary than himself. He opens thus :—

"King Ryence, says the legend of Prince Arthur, wore a paletot trimmed with king's beards. In the first French revolution (so Carlyle assures us) there were at Meudon tanneries of human skins. Mammon, at once tyrant and revolutionary, follows both these noble examples—in a more respectable way doubtless, for Mammon hates cruelty; bodily pain is his devil—the worst evil which he, in his effeminacy, can conceive. So he shrieks benevolently when a drunken soldier is flogged; but he trims his paletots, and adorns his legs, with the flesh of men and the skins of women, with degradation, pestilence, heathendom, despair; and then chuckles complacently over the smallness of his tailor's bills. Hypocrite !—straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel ! . . . .

"'The man is mad,' says Mammon, smiling in supercilious pity. Yes, Mammon; mad as Paul before Festus; and for much the same reason too. Much learning has made us mad. From two articles in the 'Morning Chronicle,' on the condition of the working tailors, *we learn too much to leave us altogether masters of ourselves.*"

Now, that reading such accounts of the sordid wretchedness of thousands of his fellow-creatures should have deprived Mr Kingsley of his self-possession, is natural and pardonable—an amiable weakness at the worst. That he should have been roused to spread far and wide a knowledge of those facts which had so startled and pained him, was natural and right also, *provided he took due pains in the first instance to assure himself of the unexaggerated correctness of these facts;* but when he proceeded to assign the cause and to vituperate the imagined authors of this suffering, a conscientious man ought to have felt that

something more was demanded than a mere surrendering of himself to the guidance of his feelings. A few hours of cool reflection, a little charity towards antagonistic reasoners, and some faint mistrust of his own mastery of a science which—to judge from the language he employs—he loathes and despises too much to have studied, would have induced him to suppress the foolish sneers at political economy with which his writings abound, and would have saved him from sending forth such disreputable rant as this :—

"Sweet competition! Heavenly maid! Now-a-days hymned alike by penny-a-liners and philosophers as the ground of all society—the only real preserver of the earth! Why not of heaven too? Perhaps there is competition among the angels, and Gabriel and Raphael have won their rank by doing the maximum of worship on the minimum of grace! We shall know some day. In the meanwhile, 'these are thy works, thou Parent of all good!' Man eating man, eaten by man, in every variety of method and degree. Why does not some enthusiastic political economist write an epic on 'The Consecration of Cannibalism!'"

We should not be disposed to treat with any great severity the absurd or violent language of a benevolent man whose understanding has been driven desperate by the sight of suffering which he cannot relieve, and which he feels certain ought not to exist; but in the diatribes against political economy,—which is merely *benevolence under the guidance of science*, —and which so many sincere philanthropists delight to study, a feeling very different from philanthropy may be detected; an intolerant, contemptuous spirit; a restless unwillingness to submit to criticism, examination, or control; and a proneness to have re-

course to persecution and abuse,—which call for the strongest reprobation. In all times and among all classes it has been the clue of the violent, the impulsive, and the fanatical, to cast vituperative epithets on troublesome opponents. The hasty innovator abuses the cautious reformer as an advocate of despotism; the timid conservative confounds the friend of sober freedom with the anarchist; and the man of orthodox but narrow piety is not ashamed to fling the name of Atheist upon all whose conceptions of the Deity are purer and loftier than his own. The unreasoning philanthropist, grown insolent from a persuasion of his own righteousness, goes to work in a similar manner: he does not scruple to inveigh against all, as cold and hard-hearted, who are clear-headed enough to see and to denounce the evil consequences which must result from his inconsiderate and short-sighted proceedings,—all whom a deep, almost religious, sense of their responsibility, forbids to act before they think. In the very spirit of the Pharisee, he assumes that he alone is sympathising and tender-hearted; and that all those who—taught by a longer experience, a deeper insight, a more studious inquiry,—would prevent him from losing the battle, by charging headlong before the line is formed, or the weapons distributed, or the ground examined, are selfish, indifferent, and unfeeling. Little do the mere impulsive philanthropists know, and ill can they appreciate, the strenuous effort, the stern and systematic self-control, by which the votary of economic science, the benevolent *man of principle*, keeps his

head cool and clear in the midst of the miseries he is called upon to contemplate; and the resolute nerve which is needed to throw cold water on the mischievous schemes of sanguine and compassionate contrivers. While these men rush fiercely on social evils, fancying it possible to sweep them away by a *coûp de main*, and always insist upon scrambling out of the bog on the wrong side, simply because it is the nearest;—the very aim of the philosophy they misconstrue and decry, is to save them from the sin and the remorse of aggravating the evils both deplore, by setting out to combat them upon a wrong system. Its purpose is, to teach them *how* to combat, and it seeks to marshall them so as to secure the victory: though in their self-opinionated and suspicious haste, they accuse it of lukewarmness or of treachery, and blindly commit themselves to the keeping of blind guides. We will not fall into their error, and proclaim the political economists to be the only genuine philanthropists; but we do deliberately claim for them the merit of the highest and most difficult order of benevolence. We claim for them the character of being, with the exception of those laborious and searching administrators of private charity, of whom we have spoken above, almost the only philanthropists whose efforts do not issue in a preponderance of evil; the only ones who have the manliness to withstand hasty impulses, the industry to investigate patiently before they decide, the judgment to allow the head to direct, while the heart prompts to action; the only ones whose charity is under the

guidance of a strict conscience, a lofty purpose, and a humble mind; the only ones, therefore, whose benevolence rises from a mere good feeling, to the height and the dignity of a virtue.

Mr Kingsley, therefore, and writers of his school, when they permit themselves to indulge in language calculated to raise distrust and prejudice against economic thinkers, are guilty, not only of bearing false witness against fellow-citizens and fellow-labourers, but of leading the zeal of the humane away from the direction in which alone it can yield the fruit desired. For, all schemes of social amelioration which violate the principles of economic science, must come to nought;—all which are consonant to them will find, from economists, a ready welcome and hearty co-operation. It is probably because Mr Kingsley has a dim consciousness that sound science will condemn his prospects and detect their fallacy, that he indulges in such bitter diatribes against it. He has satisfied himself with a half comprehension of the subject, and appears to have shrunk from the intellectual effort which a thorough investigation would require. An inquiry so vast, so difficult, so momentous,—where a false doctrine or a false step may involve consequences which will echo through all time,—demands no common qualities. It demands, primarily and pre-eminently, a close observation and humble imitation of the plans of Providence, as far as it is given to man to discern them, and to aid in their accomplishment; it demands profound compassion, but profounder patience; boundless sympathy

with every form of suffering, combined with quiet resolution in the application of the most searching probe; an unshaken conviction that no great cardinal truth of science can be discarded with impunity, or worshipped and followed without leading to ultimate and mighty good; a firm faith that sound principles will, in God's good time, however slowly, and through whatever tribulation, work out his merciful and happy ends; and that no *short cuts*, unsanctioned by these principles—such as human infirmity and natural impatience under suffering, either witnessed or endured, are constantly tempting us to take—can lead us one moment sooner to our goal; and, finally, it demands nerve to wait, alike through the distresses of others or our own, till the appropriate seed has ripened into the appointed harvest. Providence makes no short cuts; and by the whole course of history has taught us that, if we attempt them, failure and disappointment must be the inevitable issue. "Patient, because eternal;" acting by grand and immutable laws, which it is the province of science to discover, and the part of wisdom to obey; silent, steady, and unswerving; "without haste, but without rest;" the great Ruler of humanity leads us onwards towards the accomplishment of our destiny, in a progress which we cannot quicken, but may retard, by endeavouring to withdraw ourselves from his ordinances, and accelerate his march. "La Providence," says M. Guizot, "ne s'inquiète pas de tirer aujourd'hui la conséquence du principe qu'elle a posé hier;—elle la tirera dans les siècles, grand l'heure

sera venue; et pour raisonner lentement selon nous, sa logique n'est pas moins sûre. La Providence a ses aises dans le temps; ell. y marche en quelque sorte comme les dieux d'Homère dans l'espace,—elle fait un pas, et des siècles se trouvent écoulés."

The form which the ideas of many of the anti-economic philanthropists of whom we have spoken have of late assumed, tends towards an entire remodelling of the existing arrangements of society. In one shape or another, the doctrines of communism or socialism have acquired an importance and spread to an extent which entitle them to serious and dispassionate consideration. As long as socialism was confined to the turbulent, the wild, and the disreputable, and was associated with tenets which made it at once disgusting and contemptible, perhaps the wisest plan was to pass it over in silence, and suffer it to die of its own inherent weakness. But now, when it has appeared in a soberer guise and purified from much of its evil intermixtures; when it has shown itself an actual and energetic reality in France; when it has spread among the intelligent portions of the working classes in our own country more extensively than is commonly believed; when it raises its head under various modifications, and often as it were unconsciously, in the disquisitions which issue from the periodical press; when a weekly journal, conducted with great ability as to everything but logic, is devoted to its propagation; and when clergymen of high literary reputation give in their scarcely qualified adherence, and are actively

engaged in reducing to practice their own peculiar modification of the theory—it would no longer be kindly or decorous, to ignore a subject which is so deeply interesting to thousands of our countrymen; and we believe we shall be doing good service by attempting, in a clear and concise form, to extract the truth, and eliminate the error which are so strangely intermingled in the system,—by a generous recognition of all that is sound and valuable, and a frank exposure, in no bitter or contemptuous spirit, of whatever is erroneous, untenable, and pernicious.

Socialism is no new doctrine. From the earliest times men have been shocked and grieved by the evils which have prevailed in every land and in every form which society has yet assumed: subtle and ingenious thinkers have imagined model republics in which no misery should exist; and zealous and earnest philanthropists have endeavoured to realise these high imaginations and put them in actual operation. The societies thus conceived or created have assumed every possible variety of form. We have had republican societies, like Plato's, Fourier's, and Babœuf's; hierarchical and aristocratic, like St Simon's; theocratic, like the Essenes; despotic, like that of the old Peruvians and that of the Jesuits in Paraguay; Polygamists, like the Mormons. Some have been based on purely material principles, like Mr Owen's; some have been profoundly spiritual and religious, like the Moravians; some maintain the family arrangements, some altogether merge them; some recommend

celibacy, as the Essenes; some enforce it, as the Shakers; some, like the Owenites, relax the marriage tie; some, like the Harmonists, control it; some, like the Moravians, hold it sacred and indissoluble;—others, again, like Plato and the Anabaptists of Munster, advocate a community of women. Some would divide the wealth of the society equally among all the members; some, as Fourier, unequally. But one great idea pervades them all—community of property, more or less complete and unreserved—common labour for the common good.

Now, we are little disposed to break butterflies upon the wheel.* We have, too, a deep sympathy with

* This passage, and several others in this paper, gave serious offence to some estimable individuals, of whom the author would be sorry to be supposed to speak, as he certainly does not think, without sincere respect. He was severely blamed for having used so contemptuous an expression as that of "breaking butterflies upon the wheel," in reference to two men of such unquestionable ability and eminence as Mr Maurice and Mr Kingsley; and had he done so, the blame would have been richly merited. But a more careful reading of the passage would have shown his somewhat hasty censurers that his *dislike* to "break butterflies upon the wheel" is alleged precisely as his reason for directing his criticism against Messrs Maurice and Kingsley—to whose high ability, lofty character, and vigorous earnestness of purpose he is glad of this opportunity of bearing willing testimony. For the severity with which he has spoken of those who, directly or implicitly, hold up economists and economic science to public hatred, as the negation and not the embodiment of philanthropy, and of Mr Kingsley as one of the chief sinners in this line, he has no apology to offer and no recantation to make. It would be an easy, but not a pleasant task, to cite from Mr Kingsley's writings passages in abundance which would amply justify the language of reprobation, which the author has felt called upon to use.

men, and classes of men, who are endeavouring to struggle upwards under popular obloquy, and to cast off a bad reputation, either by showing that they have never deserved it, or that they deserve it no longer. In speaking, therefore, of socialism, we shall not attempt to excite prejudice against it by calling to mind what it *has* been, what bad company it has kept, to what conclusions it might be logically driven, with what scandalous and frightful scenes it has been connected in past time and in other lands. We shall not attempt to show what a poor intellectual development has prevailed in all the societies of which it has been the foundation; we shall not crucify afresh the low and fatal doctrine of the Owenites, and of nearly all the communists, in deifying the omnipotence of external circumstances; we shall not again expose that sad mixture of despotism and licentiousness which desecrated and destroyed St Simonism; we shall not take advantage of the admission of the most recent and almost official advocate of communism, Mr Thornton Hunt, that community of property, logically followed out, will, in the end, destroy the institution of marriage. We will forgive the communists all their unlucky associations and all their disreputable antecedents; and we proceed to criticise their theory and their proceedings solely in the modified and sobered form which they have now assumed. The position which they take is this:—

"Society is altogether out of joint. Its anomalies, its disfigured aspects, its glaring inequalities, the suffer-

ings of the most numerous portion of it, are monstrous, indefensible, and yearly increasing: mere palliatives, mere slow improvements, mere gradual ameliorations will not meet its wants; it must be *remodelled*, not merely furbished up. Political economy has hitherto had it all its own way; and the shocking condition into which it has brought us, shows that its principles must be strangely inadequate or unsound. The miseries of the great mass of the people,—their inability to find work, or to obtain, in return for such work as can be performed in reasonable time and by ordinary strength, a sufficiency of the comforts and necessaries of life,—may nearly all be traced to one source—*competition*, instead of combination. The antagonistic and regenerative principle which must be introduced, is *association*. Let workmen associate with one another, instead of competing with one another, and there will be work and wages enough for all. Competition is a cruel and unchristian system: association breathes the very spirit of our divine Master.—Such is the ground taken by Messrs Kingsley and Maurice; such is the foundation of the various associations of working men which have been recently formed in London and in Paris, and which are spreading through the country; and such we are willing to regard as the form which English socialism or communism has assumed, and under which it has to be discussed.

In the first place, the assertion that "political economy has hitherto had it all its own way," and is, therefore, chargeable with the present state of things,

we meet with the most indignant and peremptory denial. It is not only not true, but is precisely the reverse of true. Economists affirm, and with perfect justice, that the existing wretchedness of England is directly traceable to ignorance, neglect, and systematic violation of the principles of political economy. It is difficult to name a single precept of that science, which has not been either lost sight of, or habitually contravened. Political economy says, Industry ought to be as unshackled as the wind; restriction cripples it; protection misdirects it; the two together diminish its productiveness, and the number of mouths it can support. Yet till five years ago, when, within the historic period, *has* English industry been free and unimpeded? Political economy, re-echoing Christianity and common sense, long since proclaimed "that if any man would not work, neither should he eat:"—our law has enacted that a man shall eat, whether he will work or not. Political economy, repeating the simple teachings of morality, pronounced that if a man married without means or prospects, and brought children into the world whom he was unable to support, he acted unjustly and selfishly, as well as imprudently, and that the correction of his fault should be left to its natural results;—the law stepped in between the cause and its consequence, between the folly and its cure, and declared that if he could not support his own children, the prudent, the industrious, and the self-denying should do it for him. Political economy, reiterating the dictates of nature, proclaimed that the larger the

family a man had to support by his labour, the scantier must be the allowance of each member of it; the common custom, till 1834, was to increase the peasant's wages or allowance with every additional child that was born to him. Political economy said to the labourer, 'If population increases faster than the field of employment enlarges or the demand for labour augments, your position will inevitably deteriorate:—divines and county magistrates scouted such philosophy, and inculcated upon their hearers "increase and multiply,"—the strength of a country lies in its numbers,—"dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Lastly, political economy said, Industry, frugality, forethought, and perseverance shall not fail of their reward,—nor indolence, unthrift, and crime escape a bitter and certain retribution; the condition of the former must, under any circumstances, be immeasurably and obviously preferable. But no such thing. Disappointed and discouraged virtue sarcastically points on the one side, to the half-famished labourer and the struggling and squalid artisan; on the other, to the pauper, better fed and more warmly clothed, and his children gratuitously and admirably educated, and to the criminal in a model prison, with his comfortable cell, his warm and cold water, his cocoa, his soup, his Bible, and his bell,—and asks if political economy *has* indeed ruled this anomalous and enigmatic world.

In the second place, one of the chief notions which lie at the root of this vast scheme for associated labour,

is precisely the same which dictated the *guilds* in the middle ages,—the desire to proportion the supply of labour to the demand, by previous arrangements. It is a step back into the past. In a letter written to explain "what communism is," Mr Hunt thus expresses himself:—

"The fundamental principle of all communistic theories and systems—call them by what name you will,—is the principle of *concert in the division of employments*. . . . . The principle of communism appears to me to be the complement to the division of employments. The theory is, that if several men combine their labour, and divide the several employments among them, the economy of time, and the acquisition of skill, will increase the amount of produce; and no one will deny that the gross increase of produce must be beneficial to society. Such is the theory; but what do we find to be the fact? The fact is that the gross amount of produce is not proportionably increased; that to many of the dividers of labour it is not increased at all; and that the return of produce for labour is in no respect apportioned to exertion. I find the plain and direct ground of this in *want of concert*. It is plain that if any given number of men combine, and divide employments, they *can* make their labour much more productive, *if* there is some concert between them as to the distribution of their labour; but if there is not that concert, the chances are that some of them will be working in duplicate—producing glut; otherwise working at things not wanted; others doing about the right thing; and a few hitting on something very valuable. And when they come to divide their produce by the principle of trading exchange, a fair share will go to those who have done the right thing, half-a-share a-piece to those who have been working in duplicate, nothing to those who have worked, however honestly, yet uselessly, and an accumulation of several shares to him who has hit upon the most precious something. Precisely a description of our unorganised labour.

"It is presumed that competition increases produce more than concert would. This is a very gross presumption, and I believe a very erroneous one. In the first place, it is quite clear that the greatest amount of produce would be obtained by the best

distribution of labour, which cannot possibly be obtained without concert;—secondly, competition draws labour from the least remunerative to the most remunerative; but those which by no means "pay" best, according to the trading exchange, are among those which are most certain and profitable for society; competition, therefore, disturbs the right distribution of labour."

The whole passage appears to us very characteristic of the school from which it emanates; it presents a fair, and by no means an exaggerated, specimen of that incompleteness and feebleness of the logical faculty, that easy resting in a *half*-understanding, that complacent satisfaction with a partial glimpse, that mixing up of things totally distinct (as the *produce* of labour with the *distribution* of that produce),—which hinder so many excellent philanthropists from arriving at a recognition of their own errors. Stripped of needless verbiage, Mr Hunt's idea seems to be this; that labour would be both more productive and better rewarded, were the number of labourers in each department exactly proportioned to the need which the world has of the produce of that department; were there just the right number of tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, graziers, and corn-growers; and were this "just right number" ascertained beforehand. We may grant him his position. But how can this vital point be ascertained beforehand? How can it be ascertained at all, except by free competition, which will soon bring us the needed knowledge, by showing us which branches of industry are most, and which least, remunerative; *i.e., which branches of in-*

dustry have the fewest, and which the most labourers in proportion to the demand for their produce. If any kind of labour does not pay, this is a sign that it is not wanted, and will be abandoned; if any one pays ill, this is a proof that there are too many labourers employed in it, or, as Mr Hunt expresses it, that they are "working in duplicate." Mr Hunt would ascertain all this, not by experience, but *à priori*, "by concert." Has he ever troubled himself to consider by what machinery this preliminary concert can be managed? how the requirements of the world for this or that article can be discovered, otherwise than by making it, and seeing if the world will buy it? Would he have committees—boards of *prud'hommes*—to decide when an additional tailor, or a score of fresh bricklayers are wanted, and to forbid the existence of such till the want is clearly made manifest? No doubt some dim idea of this sort was in his mind, when he penned the passage we have quoted. But all this has been tried ages since, and is even now in partial operation in many parts of the Continent. This was the basis of the guilds of old. The incorporated tradesmen had a monopoly of their special branch of industry; they decided how many apprentices each man should be allowed to educate; how many masters should be admitted yearly into the confraternity; if the demand for coats, or watches, or furniture was slack, they restricted their numbers; if, on the contrary, society required these articles, or any others, in increased quantities, they after a considerable enhance-

ment of price, graciously permitted a moderate multiplication of the needful handicraftsmen. We presume this is the system which Mr Hunt would introduce; for between ascertaining the number of labourers required in each department by some method of this kind, or by the results of free competition, we can discern no third alternative. Is he then prepared to take the consequences of such a regulating power? and is he aware that the system was only enabled to work in former days, and could only work now, by such stern restrictions on marriage and multiplication, as the operative classes would fiercely revolt from? And that if they would submit to such restrictions, the competition system would work at least as well as any other?

Concert, then, as an opponent to, or substitute for, competition, in solving the problem of the wisest distribution of labour, is either a chimera or a tyranny. So applied, it delegates to a few men sitting in committee the decision as to the number of workmen required in each department, and the right of warning all others off the ground; while it expects from these men a wisdom and omniscience, which neither individuals nor corporations could by possibility possess. Let us now proceed to examine a little more closely the principle and the organisation of these "Associations of Workmen," which have been recently established to carry out the communistic idea; and let us endeavour to ascertain whether any, and what, fallacies and sources of failure lie hid in their constitution.

In Paris, there are said to be already 150 of these working societies. Cabinet-makers, jewellers, cooks, bakers, paviours, tailors, watch-makers, have formed themselves into a number of associations, each working in common, trading on their own capital, and dividing their gains among themselves, instead of working for a master. Some of the associations have succeeded, some have failed; some just maintain a precarious and struggling existence. Some are formed on sound principles, some on unsound. Some divide profits equally among all the associates, some divide them in proportion to the earnings. We rejoice to see the spirit, energy, and faithfulness with which many of these experiments are carried out; and we wish them all possible success. In England, similar associations have been formed, and are increasing in number, especially among the tailors, needlewomen, and shoemakers of the metropolis. One of these has acquired considerable celebrity, viz., the "Working Tailors' Association," in Castle Street; and, as this is supposed to have been constructed with the greatest care, and to owe its origin to the most educated and sober portion of the Christian Socialists, we shall select it as our touchstone.

The condition of the working tailors of the metropolis, 23,000 in number, appeared from the descriptions in the "Morning Chronicle," to be so deplorable and so unjust,—owing, as was alleged, to the system of contract work, sweaters or middle-men, and excessive competition,—that a number of benevolent men,

with Mr Maurice and Mr Kingsley at their head, resolved upon an attempt to rescue them from such wretched degradation, and, if possible, beat out and destroy the slop-sellers. For this purpose they subscribed £300, rented some suitable premises, and fairly started in business a body of operative tailors, now numbering at least thirty, under the management of a Mr Walter Cooper, himself a tailor, a chartist, and a person of considerable influence and ability. "The principles on which the association is conducted, are those of the most moderate form of socialism; that is to say, the association is not communistic, as we have defined the word, but simply co-operative. The manager, Mr Cooper, who is absolute master until the association shall have repaid the capital advanced to it, receives a salary of £2 a week: the other members work by the piece, according to a fixed tariff of prices. All work is done on the premises. No Sunday labour is allowed. Interest at the rate of four per cent. is paid on the capital lent. One-third of the net profits is by common agreement devoted to the extension of the association, by the admission of new members; the remainder is to be divided among the workmen in the ratio of their earnings, or otherwise applied to their common benefit."

Now, in all this there is nothing to which the purest political economist could object, with the single exception, that the association is trading on borrowed capital; the capital not being attracted to the trade by the expectation of profit, but being artificially

directed into a business already overstocked. If, however (as is generally the case in the Parisian associations), this capital had been supplied by the workmen themselves, the association would have presented no vulnerable point of criticism, and every economist would have bid it God speed! But it is evident that here is nothing new; the association is simply a large co-partnership,—such as Mr Mill, a sound economist, advised,—such as we advocated two years ago,—such as the "Economist" newspaper (the great bugbear of the communists) advocated many months ago, and was claimed by Mr Hunt as an unconscious socialist for so doing. In this association, the labourers work *under a directing head*, for wages fixed by him, and, as they themselves own the capital, they naturally divide among themselves the capitalist's profit. The "Needlewomen's Association" is formed on the same plan. The superintendent gives out and allots the work, and "*has the power of dismissal*, subject to the ladies' committee, or the lady visitor of the day." The superintendent here, and Mr Cooper in the other case, represent *the master as superintendent*, and the workmen (as soon, at least, as they have paid their debts) represent *the master as capitalist*; the former, therefore, receives that portion of the master's profit which repays his superintendence, and the latter, that portion which repays his capital. In what way, then, does this arrangement differ from the ordinary relations of capital and labour? Were not

many great capitalists labourers to begin with? Are not many great capitalists labourers still, and do not two or more of these labouring capitalists often unite in partnership? Where, then, an association of working men is so constructed as to violate no principle of sound economy, it introduces no new element and no new arrangement,—nothing, therefore, from which any sudden remodelling or renovation of society can be hoped,—nothing which needs to be announced with flourish of trumpets.

It is evident that these two associations contain within them one essential element of success, which is absent in theoretic socialism—*a master's hand.* As long as this is allowed, submitted to, well chosen, and well paid,—*in proportion, that is, as the existing arrangements are approximated to,*—so long the institutions will do well. Only under a master, or manager endowed with adequate authority, can an association composed of many members hold together. This has already been made clear in more than one instance in France. M. Leclaire's experiment has succeeded admirably, because he is absolute and uncontrolled governor. But in two cases which we know of, a reduction in the number of members was found necessary to save the associations from breaking up. The "Working Jewellers' Association" numbered seventeen members, but was dissolved and re-constituted with only eleven. The watch-makers have been obliged to reduce their numbers to six, and all new members are

admitted with great caution and difficulty. A despotic element is necessary when the society is to be large.

The second remark we have to make is this;—that these enterprises, which are announced to us as being, if successful, the solution of the social problem, evade the whole difficulty. *How is it* that the sweating system, with all its alleged cruelties and oppressions, is possible? Why are the slop-sellers able to get the operatives so completely in their power, to—fix their wages, and to dictate terms? Why is it that the journeymen-tailors are so powerless that they must accept any wages that are offered to them? Clearly because they are more numerous than the demand requires. Does Mr Kingsley suppose that if the 23,000 tailors in London were to be suddenly reduced to 15,000,—the coats and trousers required by society remaining the same,—the slop-sellers could compel them to work for them if they did not wish, or to work at all, except in localities of their own choosing, and on their own terms? Does he not perceive that, in the event of such an occurrence, it would be the men and not the masters who would dictate terms? Is it not abundantly obvious, that the misery and slavery of the London tailors and needlewomen arise *primarily* from the clothing needs of the metropolis being inadequate to keep so many in full and constant employment? Now have these associations,—which they are told will rescue them,—the slightest tendency, either to augment the demand for clothes, or to diminish the numbers of

the clothing artisans? If not, how can they effect any purpose, except that of ameliorating the condition of the few who become members of them?

"Oh! but" (they reply) "we purpose in time to organise all the tailors in the metropolis into similar associations." Very well; follow out your process, and see where it will lead. The fact you have to meet is this;—there are 23,000 tailors in existence, with full and constant work only for 15,000; as you continue your benevolent organisations, you will in the end have associated these 15,000, and secured to them a comfortable and continuous subsistence. *What will then have become of the residual* 8000? Will you cast them out to starve? Will you support them by a charitable contribution from the earnings of the employed? Do you suppose they will not compete with you, and rather than earn nothing, work at lower wages than you assign yourselves? Do you not perceive, that the utmost your organisation of labour can save for distribution among the mass of artisans, *is the profits of the middlemen*, which you conceive to be so enormous,—nay, only the difference between these profits and the salary you pay to your various managers and superintendents, who stand to you in the place of the middlemen? and have you taken the trouble to ask yourselves these simple questions before you announced your scheme as a great panacea—an infallible way to salvation?

"But the great merit of these associations is, that they will extinguish competition, and the reduction of

wages to which it leads." Will they indeed do this? Have they the slightest tendency to do it? Do they even contemplate doing it? True, it is the great object which Mr Kingsley, Mr Maurice, Mr Walter Cooper, and Mr Hunt propose to themselves in the promotion of them; but let us see if it be kept in view; let us inquire whether competition — "that selfish system which lies at the root of all the evils under which English industry now suffers"—be not the very life and essence of them all. It is curious to observe how the denounced principle peeps out everywhere. In the first place, we read in the account of Parisian associations by Mr Ludlow, another eminent socialist, ("Frazer's Magazine,")—"The cooks, who unfortunately are *divided into several rival associations* (one of which has lately failed), can afford to give the working classes as good a breakfast *at four sous as they can obtain elsewhere for ten.*—(Competition and under-selling this surely?)—The paviours, who have two associations, have got into their hands *by tender* —(competition and *contract-work* again!)—a large portion of the paving of Paris." In Mr Kingsley's pamphlet, "Cheap Clothes and Nasty," which is filled with tirades against competition as "cannibalism" and "devil-worship,"—after saying, in the name of the tailors, "it is competition that is ruining us, every man for himself, every man against his brother;—the remedy must be in association, co-operation, self-sacrifice for the sake of one another:—he proceeds, "We will hoard our profits, and not spend them *till we have*

squeezed out all the sweaters one by one. Then we will open our common shop, *and sell at as low a price as the cheapest of the show shops;* and then all that the master slop-sellers had better do will be, simply to vanish and become extinct." Again, "Let us help and foster the growth of these associations. Let us encourage the journeymen *to compete* with Nebuchadnezzar and Co. *at their own game,* . . . and let the association swallow up all associations similar to itself, which might end in competing with it."—"A Working Tailors' Association is actually formed in London, ready *to wage internicene war* with Nebuchadnezzar and Co.," &c., &c. Do not these passages from the most eloquent denouncer of competition themselves breathe the very spirit of the most bitter and unrelenting competition?

It must be evident, beyond dispute, to any one endowed with the most moderate amount of the ratiocinative faculty, that where there are more people anxious to do the work, than there is work to be done, they will compete with one another to obtain this work. If all the tailors in London were embodied to-morrow into a number of different associations, it is certain that these associations would compete with one another, exactly as individuals would do, because there would be too many associations (to the supposed extent of 8000 men) for the work required. "True," replies Mr Kingsley, "but our work will be incomplete till we have blended all these associations into one vast guild. Competition will then be out of the question."

Yes! but it will be replaced by *monopoly*; and we all know what monopoly means—artificial prices, a restricted market, a gigantic job, a final and inevitable smash. To sum up the whole: the advocates of association as a cure for competition are caught between two horns of a dilemma, which half Mr Kingsley's sagacity, if united with a less vivid fancy and a less copious vocabulary, would, from the first, have enabled him to foresee;—in case you have many associations, you retain all the evils of competition; in case you merge them all into one, you encounter all the evils of monopoly. We defy the Socialists to escape from this dilemma, except by assuming a remodelling of human nature by divine or Christian influences; and *when this remodelling has been achieved, all systems will become indifferent, for the evils of all systems will be wiped away.*

One of the most indefensible parts of Mr Kingsley's writings is his incessant denunciations of *cheapness*, when arising,—as nearly all cheapness, directly or indirectly, does, and has always done,—from the operation of the competitive element. It is true that in this he is merely following the unthinking multitude, echoing the restless language of the noisy and venal press, and making himself the mouthpiece of class selfishness, popular prejudice, and ignorant passion. But this is an unworthy position for a man of his intellect and education. How could any Christian minister, a thinker, a gentleman, and a scholar, permit himself to pour forth such rant as this?

"Let no man enter them (the cheap show-shops)—they are temples of Moloch—their thresholds are rank with human blood, God's curse is on them, and on those who, by supporting them, are partakers of their sins. Above all, let no clergyman deal at them.

"Poverty—and many clergymen are poor—doubly poor, because society requires them often to keep up the dress of a gentleman on the income of an artizan, because too the demands on their charity are quadruple those of any other class—yet poverty is no excuse. The thing is damnable—not Christianity only, but common humanity cry out against it. Woe to those who dare to outrage in private the principles which they preach in public! God is not mocked; and his curse will find out the priest at the altar, as well as the nobleman in his castle.

"But it is so hard to deprive the public of the luxury of cheap clothes! Then let the public look out for some other means of procuring that priceless blessing. If that, on experiment be found impossible—if the comfort of the few be for ever to be bought by the misery of the many—if civilisation *is to benefit every one except the producing class*—then this world is truly the devil's world, and the sooner so ill-constructed and infernal a machine is destroyed by that personage the better."

We wonder whether Mr Kingsley was an advocate for cheap corn? or whether, in the old days of corn-laws and agricultural protection, he took the side of *the producing class?* If the latter, he was at least consistent. But while penning this precious passage, did it never occur to him that cheapness means abundance, and that if cheap and abundant food be a blessing, cheap and abundant clothing must be a blessing likewise? Did that first prolific fact, which lies at the root of all free trade and sound political economy, never flash across his mind—that the producer of one thing is the consumer of another?—that every "producing class" benefits by the cheapness of every article

turned out by every other class?—that every class naturally desires that, while the article *it* produces should be dear, the article *every one else* produces should be cheap? Does he not perceive that this is the very rampant incarnation of selfishness? and that of this selfishness he has blindly made himself the organ and the pander? The distressed tailor wishes that clothes should be dear, but that shoes and corn should be cheap; that competition should be excluded from *his* trade, but allowed to work its natural consequence in every other. The produce of one class in the community is exchanged against the produce of another. If all "producing classes" are to be protected, and cheapness is to be eschewed and denounced in all alike—well and good! The only result will be a general rise in the price of *all* articles, and no one will be better off than before; and Mr Kingsley, when he wrote the inconsiderate passage we have quoted, ought, in common honesty, to have informed his *protégés* that the first effect of his doctrine, if fairly carried out, would be to make them pay double for their quartern loaf.

Moreover, who are the parties who most signally benefit by this much-abused cheapness? Clearly the poor of all classes—those whose clothes, shoes, and food, absorb the largest proportion of their income. Has Mr Kingsley ever reflected, how many thousands are by this very cheapness enabled to afford themselves a new coat or a new shirt, who must otherwise have gone without it?—and how many thousands of tailors

and needlewomen find employment in consequence of the enlargement of demand for their labour arising out of this very cheapness? Does he not perceive that if coats were double the price, only half the number could be sold?—and is he unable to estimate the privation both to producer and consumer, which this implies? The truth is, that the sufferings of the needlewomen and tailors have so powerfully impressed his imagination, that he is prepared to relieve them by trampling upon every other class, and by discarding every restraining rule of wisdom or of justice. "To press forward to a great principle," said Lord Stowell, "by breaking through every other principle that stands in the way of its accomplishment, is as little consonant with private morality as with public justice." "Men," says the author of "The Statesman," "who are scrupulously conscientious in all other things will often be not at all so in their kindnesses. Such men, from motives of compassion, charity, and good will, have sometimes given birth to results which the slightest exercise of common sense might have taught them to foresee; and which, if foreseen, would have alarmed the conscience of a buccaneer."

One of the chief hardships of which the needlewomen complain—one of the principal causes to which, we are told, they ascribe their deplorable condition—is the competition of individuals who are not *wholly* dependent on their labour for support; who, having a small but inadequate income, take in needlework at their own homes; and, employing in it their spare time, can

afford to do it for lower remuneration than those who must derive from it their entire support. They demand to be protected against the competition of these parties, either by law or by various arrangements, such as requiring all work to be done on the premises of the employer. Neither they nor their supporters in the press seem to be conscious either of the tyranny of this demand or of the selfishness which dictates it; for, who are those competitors against whom they protest, and whom they would wish thus summarily to extinguish? In many cases they are decayed and struggling gentlewomen—the widows and daughters of clergymen and military officers—who, unfit, from health, habits, and education, for more laborious occupations, seek in plain or fine needlework the means of eking out a scanty and difficult subsistence. They have, perhaps, savings or a pension which yields them £20 or £40 a year, on which to maintain hungry children or aged parents, who have known all the comforts and luxuries of refined existence. It would be needless barbarity and degradation to compel them to work in a shop, and for longer hours than their strength could endure; and it is such meritorious strugglers as these whom regular tailors and needlewomen are proposing to deprive of employment. That *they*, seeing, as is natural, only their own side of the case, should be anxious to commit such cruelty is pardonable enough; but that writers and reasoners, capable of a wider view, should encourage them in their injustice, is far less excusable. *They* might surely see,

that to carry out this policy fairly and completely, would require an enactment—*that no person shall work who can by possibility subsist, however miserably, without work,* lest he should interfere with some one else. Those who ask us to remedy one injustice by another, or to prevent suffering by wrong, we may feel perfectly certain, without any lengthened train of reasoning, are guiding us on a wrong tack. There can be no question, that needlework is too often wretchedly paid. But why is this? Simply because it is the easiest of all work; because it presents this point of attraction—that it *can* be done at home, in private houses, and at odd hours; because, for one woman who can do anything else, there are ten who can sew and bind; for many of the reasons, in short, which explain why hand-loom weaving is ill paid. It is an irrepealable and a righteous law, that the easiest departments of labours will always be the worst remunerated; because their very easiness will tempt superabundant numbers into them. When the remuneration becomes so inadequate as to counterbalance the temptations of facility, this superabundance will diminish, and labourers will seek other lines. If, however, *all* departments should be overstocked, then—without a diminution of numbers, or an enlargement of the field of labour—no restrictions, no cobbling, no re-distribution of employments, can meet the evil. It is on this account that we look with sadness and mistrust upon these new schemes for making society over again, as upon all old ones—upon the recent and

modified forms of communism, as upon all its previous and clumsier phases. They are all plans, not for meeting, but for evading the difficulty—not for solving, but for shirking the problem—not for untying, but for cutting the entangled knot. To show this at length, would be merely to go over again Mr Mill's admirable chapters "on popular remedies for low wages." The benevolent men and women who are setting on foot these associations of tailors, needlewomen, shoemakers, and bakers, are merely aiding them to augment the produce of their several branches of industry, without augmenting the demand for this produce and the fund for the payment of it; and can, therefore, confer no genuine or comprehensive benefit upon them. Observe, we do not in the least object to these associations; we do not even object to the proceedings of those excellent and compassionate individuals who suggest and assist in their formation; we blame them only for announcing these schemes as great discoveries and mighty engines for the rescue and redemption of society. Promulgated in such a spirit, they can end only in bitter disappointment Still we shall rejoice to see them spread whenever their rules do not contain any self-destroying fallacy; for though they will not meet and cure our great social malady, they will raise, comfort, and instruct the individual workmen. To recommend them as doing more than this is mischievous, because it is holding out expectations from them which can never be realised, and teaching the labouring classes to look for emancipa-

tion in a wrong quarter, and to lean upon a broken reed.

To sum up the whole :—Communistic Association, as opposed to Competition, can only—as indeed its more enlightened preachers fully admit—succeed in its object, when Society shall be Christianised in reality, as well as in name ; when all men shall be sufficiently purified from selfishness to work with equal zeal for the common good as for individual reward, and to wish for nothing more than an equal portion of the property of the common wealth. When this point is achieved, the existing arrangements of capital and labour would answer as well as any other ; for then every master would exact from his labourers as little toil, and pay them as large remuneration, as equity combined with benevolence, would permit. *As man now is*,—active, selfish, and ambitious, loving his family better than his neighbours, and his neighbours better than that abstract entity called the community,—associations where they differ from practicable partnerships, must be either lost in the whirlpool of competition, or wrecked on the rock of monopoly. Start the most theoretically perfect scheme of communism you can devise ; gradually eliminate from it every element which makes it work ill ; add to it, as experience suggests, every element required to make it work well ; and you will arrive either at the existing arrangements of capital and labour, or at such co-partnership systems as sound political economists have long since recommended. Distribution of employments by preliminary concert, no practicable machinery

could effect; competition, if allowed to operate unchecked, will speedily effect a wiser, juster, more productive, more expansive and adaptable distribution of them, than any government, guild, or committee which the wit of man could contrive.

"Alton Locke" professes to be the autobiography of a journeyman tailor, self-educated, a poet, and a chartist, who emancipates himself from the shackles of domestic Calvinism; publishes a volume of poems; falls in love with a lady of higher rank; becomes an agitator; gets himself involved in an agricultural riot, and is imprisoned in consequence; is concerned, in spite of his better judgment, in the chartist conspiracies of 1848; loses his health; is rescued and converted by a benevolent lady; and finally dies on a voyage to Texas. The plot is to the last degree improbable and inartistic; and the characters, with one admirable exception which deserves to live, hastily sketched, crude, and inconsistent. We have journeyman tailors who correct Latin proofs for Cambridge undergraduates, and scatter about the technical terms of scholastic logic; working chartists, who quote Ariosto; and high-born ladies, who enter into sentimental conversation with unknown and ill-dressed strangers at the Dulwich gallery;—with other equally unlikely occurrences. Considered as a novel or a professed literary work of art, "Alton Locke" lies open to severe criticism. But it would be hardly fair to regard it in this light. It is written with a philanthropic purpose, and is a series of descriptions of the most

painful and harrowing scenes which life can present among the poor; a gallery of pictures of early homes made miserable by the most unflinching Calvinism; of tailors' workshops, close, fetid, and crowded; of courts and alleys filthy and pestilential past imagination, and we should hope, past fact also; of sweaters' dens where incautious workmen are imprisoned till they become mere skeletons; of starving peasants meeting upon wintry downs and pouring forth descriptions of the dreariest wretchedness; of conspirators' rooms filled with frantic Irishmen and watched by government spies—all drawn with vast graphic power, and portrayed in colours such as only a genuine poet could command. The work abounds in passages of wild, unchastened eloquence; and, amid much aimless declamation, and not a little language which Christian feeling and scholarly taste must alike condemn, it breathes through every page a profound and passionate sympathy with the sufferings of the poor. To us the purity of this sympathy is alloyed and its effect injured, by the bitter, indiscriminate, and unsparing indignation which is poured out upon the rich, the government, and the clergy.

We have not space for any detailed analysis of the work, nor for many extracts even of those parts which we most admire. One passage, however, we will present to our readers, both on account of the fearful truth of the pictures it contains, and also as introducing Sandy Mackaye, the shrewd, excellent, pure-hearted old Scotchman, the redeeming character of the book. The

young poet had commenced his essays by a description of the South Sea Islands, and Mackaye tells him to choose his subject from the poetry that lies around him:—

"'What the deevil! is there no harlotry and idolatry here in England, that ye maun gang speering after it in the Cannibal Islands? Are ye gaun to be like they puir aristocratic bodies, that wad suner hear an Italian dog howl, than an English nightingale sing?

"'Coral Islands? Pacific? What do you ken about Pacifics? Are ye a cockney or a Cannibal Islander? Dinna stand there, ye gowk, as fusionless as a doken, but tell me that. Where do ye live?

"'What do ye mean, Mr Mackaye!' asked I, with a doleful and disappointed visage.

"'Mean—why, if God had meant ye to write about Pacifics, He'd ha put ye there—and because he means ye to write about London town, He's put ye there—and gien ye an unco sharp taste o' the ways o't; and I'll gie ye anither. Come along wi' me.' And he seized me by the arm, and hardly giving me time to put on my hat, marched me out into the streets, and away through Clare Market to St Giles's.

"It was a foul, chilly, foggy, Saturday night. From the butchers' and greengrocers' shops the gas lights flared and flickered, wild and ghastly, over haggard groups of slip-shod dirty women, bargaining for scraps of stale meat and frost-bitten vegetables, wrangling about short weight and bad quality. Fish stalls and fruit stalls lined the edge of the greasy pavement, sending up odours as foul as the language of the sellers and buyers. Blood and sewer water crawled from under doors and out of spouts, and reeked down the gutters among offal, animal and vegetable, in every stage of putrefaction. Foul vapours rose from cow-sheds and slaughter-houses, and the doorways of undrained alleys, where the inhabitants carried the filth out on their shoes from the back yard into the court, and from the court into the main street; while above, hanging like cliffs over the streets—those narrow brawling torrents of filth, and poverty, and sin—the houses with their teeming load of life were piled up into the dingy, choking night. A ghastly, deafening, sickening sight it was. Go, scented Belgravian! and see what London is; and then go to the library which God has given thee

—one often fears in vain—and see what science says this London might be!

"He stopped suddenly before the entrance of a miserable alley.

"'Look!—there's not a soul down that yard but's either beggar, drunkard, thief, or worse. Write anent that! Say how ye saw the mouth o' hell, and the twa pillars thereof at the entry—the pawnbroker's shop o' one side and the gin palace at the other—twa monstrous deevils, eating up men, and women, and bairns, body and soul. Are na they a mair damnable man-devouring idol than ony red-hot statue o' Moloch, or wicker Gogmagog, wherein auld Britons burnt their prisoners? Look at thae barefooted, bare-backed hizzies, with their arms roun' the men's necks, and their mouths full o' vitriol and beastly words! Look at that Irishwoman pouring the gin down the babbie's throat! Look at that raff o' a boy gaun out o' the pawnshop, where he's been pledging the handkerchief he stole the morning, into the gin shop, to buy beer poisoned wi' grains o' paradise, and cocculus indicus, and saut, and a' damnable, maddening, thirst-breeding, lust-breeding drugs! Look at that girl that went in wi' a shawl to her back and cam' out wi'out ane! Drunkards frae the breast!—harlots frae the cradle!—damned before they're born! John Calvin had an inkling of the truth there, I'm a'most driven to think, wi' his reprobation deevil's doctrines!'

"'Well—but—Mr Mackaye,—I know nothing about these poor creatures.'

"'Then ye ought. What do ye ken aboot the Pacific? Which is maist to your business?—thae bare-backed hizzies that play the harlot o' the other side o' the warld, or these—these thousands o' bare-backed hizzies that play the harlot o' your ain side—made out o' your ain flesh and blude? You a poet! True poetry, like true charity, my laddie, begins at hame. If ye'll be a poet at a', ye maun be a cockney poet, and while the cockneys be what they be, ye maun write, like Jeremiah of old, o' lamentation and mourning and woe, for the sins o' your people. Gin ye want to learn the spirit o' a people's poet, down wi' your Bible and read thae auld Hebrew prophets; gin ye would learn the style, read your Burns frae morning till night; and gin ye'd learn the matter, just gang after your nose, and keep your eyes open, and ye'll no miss it.'

"'But all this is so—so unpoetical.'

"'Hech! Is there no the heeven above them there, and the hell beneath them, and God frowning, and the deevil grinning? No

poetry there! Is no the verra idea of the classic tragedy defined to be, man conquered by circumstance? Canna ye see it there? And the verra idea of the modern tragedy, man conquering circumstance?—and I'll show ye that, too—in mony a garret where no eye but the gude God's enters, to see the patience, and the fortitude, and the self-sacrifice, and the luve stronger than death, that's shining in thae dark places o' the earth. Come wi' me, and see.'"

We must add one more extract, for the sake of the valuable lesson to clergymen which it contains. The writer is in prison, and the chaplain is endeavouring to convert him from his errors with the usual weapons that such men employ:—

"Then he deluged me with tracts, weak and well-meaning, which informed me that 'Christians,' being 'not of this world,' had nothing to do with politics; and preached to me the divine right of kings, passive obedience to the powers—or impotences—that be, &c., &c., with such success as may be imagined. I opened them each, read a few sentences, and laid them by. They were written by good men, no doubt; but men who had an interest in keeping up the present system; at all events, by men who knew nothing of my temptations, my creed, my unbelief; who saw all heaven and earth from a station antipodal to my own: I had simply nothing to do with them.

". . . . The good man laboured under the delusion, common enough, of choosing his favourite weapons from his weakest faculty; and the very inferiority of his intellect prevented him from seeing where his true strength lay. He *would* argue; he would try to convert me from scepticism, by what seemed to him reasoning, the common figure of which was, what logicians, I believe, call begging the question; and the common method, what they call *ignoratio elenchi*—shooting at pigeons, while crows are the game desired. He always started by demanding my assent to the very question which lay at the bottom of my doubts. He would wrangle and wrestle blindly up and down, with tears of earnestness in his eyes, till he had lost his temper, as far as was possible for one so angel-guarded as he seemed to be; and then, when he found himself confused, contradicting his own words, making con-

cessions at which he shuddered, for the sake of gaining from me assent to propositions which he found out the next moment I understood in quite a different sense from his, he would suddenly shift his ground, and try to knock me down authoritatively with a single text of Scripture; when all the while I wanted proof that Scripture had any authority at all. . . . .

"Besides, I never denied the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, or his apostles. I doubted the myths and doctrines which I believed to have been gradually built up round the true story. The fact was, he was, like most of his class, attacking extinct Satans, fighting manfully against Voltaire, Volney, and Tom Paine: while I was fighting for Strauss, Hennell, and Emerson. And at last he gave me up for some weeks as a hopeless infidel, without ever having touched the points on which I disbelieved. He had never read Strauss—hardly even heard of him; and till clergymen make up their minds to do that, and to answer Strauss also, they will, as he did, leave the heretic artisan just where they found him."

The counts of our indictment against "Alton Locke" are threefold. In the first place we object on principle to stories written with the purpose of illustrating an opinion or establishing a doctrine. We consider this an illegitimate use of fiction. Fiction may be rightfully employed to impress upon the public mind an acknowledged truth, or to revise and recall a forgotten one,—never to prove a disputed one. Its appropriate aims are the delineation of life, the exhibition and analysis of character, the portraiture of passion, the description of nature. Polemics, whether religious, political, or metaphysical, lie wholly beyond its province. The soundness of this literary canon will be obvious if we reflect that the novelist *makes his facts* as well as his reasonings. He *coins* the premises from which his conclusions are deduced; and he may coin exactly what he wants. It would be equally easy

to write a tale to illustrate the evils of the Corn Laws, or the evils of their repeal. The artisan, famishing for want of food, or for want of employment caused by a restrictive policy, would furnish the fundamental fact of the first case; the peasant, famishing from want of occupation consequent upon the impoverishment of the farmers, and upon the land being turned from arable into pasture, would supply the basis of the second; and on such foundations a skilful artist might raise a superstructure which would horrify the free-trader on the one side and the protectionist on the other. Nay, the controversial writer of fiction need not actually *make* his facts; he needs only to *select* them. An incomplete and partial picture will answer his purpose just as well as a false one—far better, indeed. A skilful grouping of materials, ignoring or throwing into the background whatever might either mar the harmony of the picture or induce a suspicion of its fidelity to nature,—a careful tracing back of facts to their supposed causes and their intended effects,—would enable him triumphantly to defend almost any thesis, and establish in the minds of his readers almost any creed.

Now, "Alton Locke" is written with the obvious intention to deprecate competition as the source of most of the evils of English society, and to recommend Christian Socialism as their cure. For this purpose the story is constructed; to this, much of the copious declamation it contains is directed. On the fallacy which lies hid at the bottom of these views, we have already said enough; and we therefore pass over

several tirades against competition and "cannibalism," which we had marked for extraction and reproof.

But apart from these errors, "Alton Locke" is pervaded by another, which we have already had occasion, in former articles, to condemn. There is all the old staple of demagogism: the neglect of the poor by the rich; the indifference of the higher classes; the dereliction of duty by the government; the contrast between the fat sheep or well-groomed cart-horse, and the ill-fed and ill-lodged labourer; the irritating averment, that "society has denied them their rights,"—so welcome to clever, but poverty-stricken and struggling artisans. There is the usual jumble between the fourteenth century and the nineteenth; the desire to recall the time when the poor were at once the serfs and the *protégés* of the rich, and to amalgamate it with the days of chartism, when the poor assert their equality, and insist upon their freedom.* It is not

* Proudhon, with the sagacity his writings so often show, has well exposed this inconsistency. "Les socialistes ont confondu deux choses essentiellement distinctes, lorsque, opposant l'union du foyer domestique à la concurrence industrielle, ils se sont demandé si la société ne pouvait être constituée précisément comme une grande famille, dont tous les membres seraient liés par l'affection du sang, et non comme une espèce de coalition où chacun est retenu par la loi de ses intérêts. La famille n'est pas le type, la molecule organique de la société. La famille est le type et le berceau de la monarchie et du patriciat: en elle réside et se conserve l'idée d'autorité et de souveraineté, qui s'efface de plus en plus dans l'état. C'est sur le modèle de la famille que toutes les sociétés antiques et féodales s'étaient organisées, *et c'est précisément contre cette vieille constitution patriarcale que proteste et se revolte la démocratie moderne.*"

thus that irritations can be allayed, or miseries removed, or wrongs redressed. The working classes and their advocates must decide on which of the two positions they will take their stand: whether they will be cared for as dependents and inferiors? or whether, by wisdom, self-control, frugality and toil, they will fight their independent way to dignity and well-being,—whether they will step back to a stationary and degraded past, or strive onward to the assertion of their free humanity? But it is not given to them any more than to other classes, to combine inconsistent advantages: they cannot unite the safety of being in leading-strings with the liberty of being without them; the right of acting for themselves, with the right to be saved from the consequences of their actions; they must not whine because the higher classes do not aid them, while they refuse to let these classes direct them; they must not insist on the duty of government to provide for them, while denying the authority of government to control them; they must not denounce *laissez-faire*, and denounce a paternal despotism likewise.

We are little disposed to extenuate the negligences of our rulers, or the short-comings of our aristocracy. Both have much to undo, and much to make amends for in the past; and both, we think, have shown an earnest resolution to atone for their sins of omission and commission, as far as sins can ever be atoned for. All, however, that can now be done, is to remove every legal obstacle in the way of the improvement of the condition of the people, to facilitate and encourage

every effort which they make in a right direction, and to promote their education as far as religious prejudices and passions will allow. All this government is now doing with a single purpose and a zealous will; and none who remember what the functions and what the powers of government in a free country are, will expect them to do more than the public are willing to let them do. Those are no true friends of the working classes—though they may think themselves such, and wish to be such—who would induce them to rely on external aid, for objects which must be achieved by themselves, if they are to be achieved at all, and to seek their emancipation in a change of circumstances and social arrangements, rather than in a change of character and conduct. Our sympathy with popular suffering, is as prompt and ready as that of any of the speculators who show it in so strange a way. But we would manifest it by steadily discountenancing any attempt to get out of their troubles in the worst, because it happens to be the shortest, way, and to build their better fortunes on a treacherous quicksand, instead of on solid ground. We, too, have our visions of the future of the working classes; and they are as bright and hopeful as any socialist could indulge in. But we seek their realisation, not in a recurrence to mediæval errors, not in repeating the abortive experiments of unenlightened times, but in steady adherence to those principles of moral and economic science, whose truth is confirmed alike by every instance of conformity, and every instance of disobedience; we

would prepare the advent of the days we dream of, not by upsetting, but by developing, the natural arrangements of society,—not by doing violence to the strongest and truest instincts of our nature, but by strictly conforming to their highest manifestations,—not by surrounding man with artificial environments which shall make subsistence certain, enterprise superfluous, and virtue easy, low-pitched, and monotonous, but by calling forth and cultivating those inborn capacities and noble energies, which can subdue and mould external circumstances, can conquer casualties and command results,—qualities, by the exercise of which a social paradise might be regained, in default of which, such a paradise, if bestowed, would soon be forfeited and lost.

1850.

PROGRESS AND HOPES OF SOCIALISM.

THE complicated interests and wants of society; the conflict between our desires and our capacities, our aspirations and the circumstances which repress them and hedge them in; the prodigious and unforeseen start which industry has taken in modern days; the rapid development of those powers and talents which bear upon material civilisation, contrasted with the slower elaboration of the wisdom which should guide them, and the virtues which should hallow and pervade them; the energetic operation of that passion of self-interest which is given to be the motive impulse of our course, unchecked and unchastened by those loftier sympathetic principles which were meant to be its counteracting and modifying influence,—have combined to produce social evils and anomalies which, as they are brought to light either by the researches of the benevolent or the outcries of the suffering, give rise to a ceaseless succession of schemes for their mitigation or removal. Perhaps none of them are new; perhaps every one of them has in turn been propounded and exposed, tried and abandoned by preceding generations; but it is certain that, since the vast demolition of everything ancient, venerable, and esta-

blished, which was effected by the first French Revolution, these projects have been renewed time after time with a degree of pertinacity, a prolific fertility, a dogged and impetuous enthusiasm, to which no previous age offers a parallel. At the present moment, and in our own country, some of them are now revived with such judicious modifications, and by men of such unquestionable ability and purity of purpose; and they are so aided by the knowledge of social evils, which is more general than it ever was before, and by the Christian benevolence of the age, which is more earnest and indefatigable than it ever was before—that they well deserve an attentive and candid examination.

Of these schemes for setting society right, those comprehended under the general but undefined name of "Socialism," seem endowed with the most indestructible vitality. We shall not attempt to do what their advocates have never been able to agree among themselves in doing, viz.: to define either the meaning of the word, or the common element embodied in all the forms which Socialism has assumed. It has as many shapes as Proteus, and as many colours as the chameleon. It is one thing in the hands of St Simon, and another in the pages of Fourier; Owen gives it a third form, Thornton Hufit a fourth, Mr Kingsley and his friends a fifth. It would be impossible to chase it through these various disguises; nor would our time be profitably spent in doing so: it is only when it descends from the domain of theory, and assumes a concrete form and an actual existence, that we, as practical

economists and political philosophers, are concerned with it. Socialism, as we used to hear of it in England, was connected with atheistical opinions, with Mr Owen's name, and with many wild doctrines and projects which needed no formal refutation. Socialism, in France, is commonly conceived of as a creed held by the lowest and most violent of the political parties which distract that unhappy land—the *extreme gauche* of the Republicans. In neither of these phases are we at present concerned with it; in neither of these do we think it likely to have a permanent existence, a formidable influence, or a rapid spread; and in both it is connected with disreputable and damaging ingredients which, as we believe, are wholly foreign to and separable from its essence.

But both in England and France the fundamental idea of Socialism—which we take to be that of a fraternal union among men for industrial purposes, a working in common for the common good, in place of the usual arrangement of labourers and capitalists, employers and employed—has been seized upon by intelligent and ambitious operatives, and by philanthropic schemers, and made the foundation of certain Associations for which they now claim public sympathy and aid, as containing the solution of the great problem of social life, and rich in promise for the rehabilitation of the working classes and the restoration of the community to a healthy and happy condition. These associations are of two kinds;—"*Working Associations*," in which a number of operatives or handicrafts-

men possessing some capital, either their own or borrowed, agree to work together as a company and for themselves, instead of working for a master; and "*Co-operative stores,*" in which a number combine to keep a shop of their own, in which they are both purchasers, and vendors, in place of buying from the usual shopkeepers. In England these societies are in their infancy; and have been, for the most part, started under the superintendence and by the fostering care of a body of gentlemen who denominate themselves Christian Socialists, and whose Christianity will be respected even by those who most doubt their wisdom and condemn their economic views. In France, the associations were almost all formed and sustained by the men themselves; and have, we believe, been generally conducted with a zeal, perseverance, fairness, and mutual forbearance which assuredly deserves, and must command, a great measure of success. In Paris alone, these bodies are said to be 197 in number, of which bakers and hatters furnish 6 each; hairdressers 34, and cooks 47. Some of these are recent; others have been established for some years;—some are flourishing; others are struggling for a bare subsistence; but all, we believe, are very sanguine as to ultimate success. The "Working Associations" in London are nine in number; of which two are tailors, two builders, one needlewomen, one printers, one pianoforte makers, one shoemakers, and one bakers. There are a few others in the provinces, principally in Lancashire; where are also several "Co-operative Stores."

Let us now inquire what these associations do, how they work, what they propose to themselves, and how far their hopes are likely, or possible, to be realised. We will not pause over the various mistakes made by several of them at their first outset, or the difficulties, frequently fatal ones, which they encountered either from want of caution or defect of legal protection;—we will speak of those only which have at length taken root in the soundest principles, and which are conducted by the ablest men. The Working Tailors' Association in Castle Street may, we believe, be taken as a fair sample. It has an able man at its head; it was the first established; has been subjected to an unusual amount of criticism; has eliminated, we understand, some of the errors of its original constitution; and may be assumed to have paid back (or to be in a sure way of doing so) the loan with which it originally started, so as to be now working on its own capital. There are, or were shortly ago, thirty-four members and a manager. There is a committee of management, but the details of arrangement are conducted by the manager, who assigns to each man his work; fixed weekly wages are paid according to capacity or desert, and profits are divided among the workmen according to their earnings. (This arrangement varies in different associations, but to this they will all ultimately come, as it is obviously the only equitable arrangement). New members are admitted by ballot, and must be "probationers" for a year before they are ballotted for; and great care is exercised, or assumed to be, in selecting the probationers.

Now in all this there is nothing that the strictest political economist can object to. Here you have a number of men, dissatisfied with the ordinary industrial arrangements of society—the separation of capitalist and labourer—and who agree to unite the two functions; to combine their small savings, and become their own employers; to form a partnership among themselves *as capitalists* for the purpose of giving work to themselves *as labourers;* and thus to monopolise *in their single persons, but in their double capacity,* the profits of the master, and the wages of the journeyman. As capitalists, they have of course a perfect right to lend their money to the partnership instead of putting it in the Savings Banks or in sick clubs; as workmen they have a perfect right to prefer working for the partnership, to working for an individual employer. No man can gainsay them. Both their object and their means are quite legitimate and very honourable. We wish them all success. All seems fair. They pay interest for the capital employed; they pay wages for the work done; and they divide profits, as partners should, in proportion to the degree in which each member has contributed to make those profits.

But there will arise practical difficulties which, though many among them must at least dimly foresee, we do not think that those who anticipate such splendid success and rapid spread for these associations, can have adequately weighed. These difficulties will multiply according to the number of associates, accord-

ing to the length of time they may exist, according to the severity of the "bad times" they may have to encounter. As they proceed they will find, we fear, that their harmonious and prosperous existence will depend upon a fairness, a forbearance, a self-abnegating submission, a humbleness, or at least a clear-sightedness and justice in the estimation of their own respective merits, a patience under privation—in a word, a degree of mental and moral development, which,—though not perhaps rarer among the working classes than among other ranks—is rare everywhere, and can scarcely be reasonably expected to be *predominant* among numerous bodies. How long will each workman be content with the kind and nature of the work allotted to him, without accusing the manager of favouritism? How long will the tailor who "conceits" himself to be a good cutter-out, be satisfied with the dissenting judgment of the manager who delegates him to the work and the wages of a sewer? How long will the man who imagines himself to be clean, industrious, and accurate, submit to the decision of those who decide that he is slovenly, idle, and careless? How long will he bear to pay fines which he will not admit to have incurred, and to receive lower remuneration than his fellow-workmen whom he deems to be no abler than himself? It is no longer a monarchy, like ordinary establishments, but a republic, where his vote is as good as any other man's. He will league himself with other associates like himself, who are discontented with what probably

is a perfectly fair allotment, will intrigue against the manager, will agitate for an alteration of the rules, and if he can collect a considerable minority, will be a source of endless torment and intestine discord. Or if he is a superior workman, who could command first-rate remuneration elsewhere, will he continue satisfied to remain associated with a number of men whose comparative idleness and incapacity sadly diminish the potential profits of the concern, and perhaps bring discredit upon the articles it produces? Will he submit to suffer for their faults, which yet, being in a minority, he cannot control nor escape from? And how long will those who *work with their hands* be willing to pay to those who *work with their head*, and whose labour it is not therefore easy for them to appreciate or appraise, a sufficient remuneration to secure the skill, integrity, and firmness indispensable to command success? Already, as we learn from several quarters, and as Mr Coningham in his recent lecture at Brighton admitted, this difficulty has been severely felt, and when those periods arrive which must come in all trades, when work is slack and wages low, is it probable that the members of a numerous association will have sufficient good sense and forbearance to submit to inevitable privation, or sufficient intelligence to believe that it *is* inevitable? Will they abstain from seeking work elsewhere during their unemployed hours? Will they abstain from reproaching their manager with mis-management and incapacity? Will they meet cheerfully what must be met?

But we will suppose that, either by great skill in admitting only members whose wisdom and virtue are as exceptional as the demands which will be made upon them by such contingencies as we have named,—or by such wise rules and legal power of enforcing them, as may put down discontent, and provide a summary decision for all disputes,—these difficulties are all surmounted, and the associations have struggled through to a permanent existence ;—it still remains to inquire, how far their hopes will be realised, and what probability there is that the expectations held out to their members can escape disappointment. For what are the anticipations with which they enter on these projects ? They assume, that in the existing division of gains between capital and labour, the former secures a most unjust and inordinate share of the remuneration. They affirm also, that the number of middlemen is needlessly large, and their profits scandalously disproportioned to their services. And they propose to themselves by the new arrangement to do away with both middleman and capitalist, and to appropriate among themselves the present remuneration of the two functionaries. It is clear that there is here an important hiatus in their premises. Even if we assume that the profits of the co-operative partnership are equal in the long run to those of an establishment of equal size conducted by an individual capitalist,—that the interest each workman takes in the success of the concern, will counterbalance the zeal, watchfulness, devotion, and single despotism of a skilful, intelligent,

and wealthy tradesman,—and that the workmen will consent to pay such a salary to their chief, as will command a necessary amount of talent, integrity, and diligence,—still it is obvious, that all which the co-operative associates could hope to grasp would be—not the *entire* profits of the middleman and capitalist—not even the net profits after deducting the interest of money—but simply *the difference between such net profits and those salaries which they must, and do, themselves pay to those functionaries who, in their establishment, represent the capitalist and middleman—i.e., the manager and foreman.* These functionaries may be fewer in their establishment, and may possibly be worse paid; but it is reckoning without their host to imagine that they can dispense with them altogether. Moses and Son, are reproached with letting out their work to middlemen;—it is alleged, and we dare say truly, that many of these middlemen, by fair or unfair means, make enormous gains;—but if a co-operative association were to carry on business on the same scale as Moses and Son, how many foremen, putters-out, and distributors of work must they employ? And what would these distributors be, but middlemen to all intents and purposes, with this sole difference,—that they would be middlemen working on a salary, instead of on their own account? In the present case, Moses and Son say to the middlemen:—"Mr Jones, Mr Smith, and Mr Stocks, here are 500 waistcoats each; give them out to good workmen, and let me have them back on

Thursday." In the other case, Mr Cooper, the manager, would say to his foremen :—" Mr Edwards, Mr Williams, Mr Skyes, here are 500 waistcoats; distribute them to the proper men, and collect them again on Thursday." Mr Cooper would probably have to employ at least as many foremen, as Messrs Moses employ middlemen, though at much lower earnings; and the *difference* between the earnings of the two sets of functionaries, would be all that the co-operative workmen could save and share of the now be-grudged profits of the middlemen. Again, if the individual capitalist, after paying interest of money, puts into his pocket annually and on an average of years, a larger sum, *as profit*, than the co-operative association would have to pay to their manager (or *gérant*), *as salary*, in order to obtain a man of equal knowledge, skill, vigilance, integrity, and zeal,—then the *difference* between these two sums would be all that the association could appropriate of the now envied accumulations of the capitalist. If the workmen have entered these societies with any expectation of higher economic advantages than these, that expectation is doomed to certain disappointment.

Now, our firm conviction is that, in an average of cases, and on an average of years, the profits of the capitalist (above interest) will be found to be no more than a fair and moderate remuneration for those qualities and that attention which are required equally from the manager of a co-operative association, and must, therefore, be remunerated equally; so that the

whole pecuniary gain would be limited to the before-mentioned difference between the earnings of foremen and middlemen. We shall be told that the earnings of these middlemen are swelled by the extortion of scandalous gains upon food advanced, and unjust fines for alleged bad or unpunctual work. This is no doubt in many cases true; but, in the *first* place, it is not to be supposed that fines, or their equivalent, will not have to be levied in case of careless or slovenly co-operative workmen;—in the *second* place, these fines where unjust, form a portion of the allowed-for earnings of the middlemen;—and, in the *third* place, the possibility of these alleged iniquitous extortions arises from the men being placed in the power of their oppressors, either owing to their redundant numbers, or their imprudence and recklessness—evils which, as we shall presently see, the establishment of the co-operative system will leave untouched.

The case of "Co-operative Stores" is precisely analogous. Here the aim of the associates is to secure to themselves the profit of the capitalist, who is a small tradesman or shopkeeper—a perfectly legitimate object, if they are themselves capitalists. There can be no reason why fifty operatives, who have saved £10 each, should not set up a draper's or a grocer's shop, just as well as two small tradesmen who have £250 each. But if they imagine that they can, by so doing, secure to themselves any greater pecuniary advantage than the *difference* between the profits for which the two small tradesmen are willing to work, and the

salary which they, the co-operatives, must pay to their foreman or managing clerk; or if they imagine that they can command such foremen, endowed with the honesty, skill, and vigilance, needed to insure the prosperity of their concern, for remuneration materially lower than that which the individual tradesman allots to himself in the form of profit,—they are preparing for themselves a certain, bitter, and easily to be foreseen disenchantment. We do not say that collateral, moral, and educational benefits may not arise in the case of both working associations and co-operative stores, for the sake of which it might be well even to encounter some pecuniary loss;—but we do say, that the possible pecuniary gain is limited in the manner we have specified.

Having thus endeavoured to distinguish between the reasonable and unreasonable expectations of the "Christian Socialists," and to assign the limits of possible pecuniary advantage which might result to the promoters of "Working Associations" and "Co-operative Stores," we will now endeavour to ascertain what grain of truth may lie hid in those wide, and more brilliant, visions in which these philanthropists indulge; and what prospect there is, in sober reality, that society can be restored, or its deeper sufferings materially alleviated, by the general adoption of their plans.

For the Christian Socialists do not, by any means, confine their projects to securing the establishment and success of a certain number of associations of working men, who shall be labourers and capitalists in one;

they propose to multiply these associations, till they embrace the whole field of each separate department of industry, and to extend these co-operative stores till they have extinguished all individual shopkeepers in the several branches of retail trade. Even then, their work will be only half accomplished: they will then proceed to complete and crown their undertaking, by uniting all the associations in each trade into one vast *guild*, governed by a central committee; and, finally, by effecting a union of all these guilds into one gigantic fraternal combination, whose affairs shall be directed by delegates from all the guilds. By this means, the whole of the industrial arrangements of society will be revolutionised; and the noble, Christian, and pacific principle of concert and co-operation will be substituted for the selfish, mischievous, and wicked one of competition.

Competition, they affirm, is the great devil of the modern system of industry and commerce—the Satan of our complicated civilisation—the root to which all our aggravated sufferings may be traced. Competition gluts our markets; competition drives down prices below a remunerating point; competition lowers wages beyond the limits of subsistence; competition enables the rich to take advantage of the necessities of the poor; competition makes each man snatch the bread out of his neighbour's mouth, converts a nation of brethren into a mass of hostile and isolated units, and finally involves capitalist and labourer in one common ruin. Now we will pass over for the present the inquiry how

far this is an exaggerated statement of one side of the question, and an entire and unfair ignoring of the other, and we will simply consider the mode in which the Socialists propose to meet and abolish this devouring mischief.

Their first plan is the one so strongly eulogised in the Christian Scriptures—casting out Satan by Satan's agency. They propose to beat out Moses and Son and all other rivals by every art which the most resolute and indefatigable spirit of competition can supply. They will not rest, they say, till they have driven every slop-seller and "competitive" employer from the trade. With this hallowed aim—so sacred in their hands, so iniquitous in everybody else's—they put in operation all the usual means of success. They promise to make articles at least as good or better, and to sell them at least as cheap or cheaper, than any other establishment. They advertise as vigorously, in proportion to their funds. They profess as largely, and describe as glowingly. They *tout* for custom with at least equal zeal. They and their supporters canvass among their friends, and entreat them to leave tradesmen who have served them long and well, in order to encourage these new associations. We know this to be the case. We do not blame them for it: if they promise no more than they perform, and are guilty of no untrue or unfair representations, and no malicious depreciation of their rivals, their exertions are perfectly legitimate. But if legitimate in them, they must be equally legitimate in others whom yet they denounce for using them.

We will imagine them successful. We will imagine that in each trade numerous associations of working men have been formed, and that, by the effects of superior diligence, honesty, and skill—by superior *cheapness* in a word (the very word which is the object of such fierce denunciations from their most eloquent writers!) they have driven every individual capitalist and employer from the arena. Or, to make the matter clearer, we will suppose all this to have been effected in a single trade—the tailors. Do they imagine that they have, by this process, either diminished the number of workmen, or increased the aggregate amount of work to be done? Nay; will not the tendency of their success have been to multiply the workmen by improving their condition, and consequently the inducements to enter into it? And if they have neither increased the work nor diminished the workmen, have they lessened by one iota that fact which lies at the root of all competition, and which must render competition as lasting as itself—viz., the insufficiency of work for all the workmen who are seeking it? Do they imagine that the associations will not compete with one another for that full employment which is unattainable by all?—compete, in the first instance, by promising superior punctuality, neatness, and skill? compete, in the end, by offering their goods at a lower price? Do they imagine that the man who has ten children and a sick wife will be content with that half-work which may satisfy his bachelor associate, if, by offering himself at lower wages, or his productions at a

lower price, he can obtain full work? If they do imagine all this, they count upon the existence of qualities which have yet to be developed. They count upon the predominance of sentiments which are now vanquished, latent, or in abeyance. They count upon the love of the community being stronger than the love of the family, and the love of one's neighbour being stronger than the love of oneself—which it never has been, as a rule, or among numbers, except in transient moments of aroused enthusiasm. They count, in fact, upon a change in the relative strength of human feelings and propensities—upon a remodelling of human nature (which is a very different thing from its gradual improvement—a faith which we hold as firmly as themselves):—They are, therefore, soaring out of the region of experience into the domain of fancy—whither we do not care to follow them, because there speculation becomes both unprofitable and delusive.

Again. Do they imagine that these associations will be composed, on an average, of men of equal degrees of capacity and cleverness? and that the association composed of skilful and energetic workmen will not, as a matter of course and of necessity, compete with and beat out the association composed of workmen who may in comparison be termed slothful and slovenly? Do they believe that these latter will not then, inevitably and as a matter of self-defence, lower their prices to counterbalance the inferior quality of their goods, and work longer to make amends for

working slower? Moreover, what will become of those hands who, at the original formation of the associations, were found to be redundant,—for whom no work was left when the associations were all adequately employed,—and who are consequently left floating on the surface of the trade, and must either be maintained in idleness, or will form themselves into supernumerary associations to drag down the others, or will work for individual capitalists at low wages, so as to defeat their schemes? They cannot suppose that these men will be content, out of tender regard for the general good, to be extinguished or ignored. They cannot pretend to deny their existence, for it is out of the very fact of this surplus of hands that all the evils of the actual competition spring. If there were no such surplus, the masters would compete for the men, instead of the men competing for the masters; and the workmen would long since have sprung into power and independence. There is no *answer* to all this; but a mitigating plea will be put in, which, as we wish to leave no gap unstopped, we must not pass over without notice. We shall be told, and have been told, that by the introduction of the associated system, the condition of the tailors would be so improved, and the wages actually received by them so much enhanced, that they would themselves become *customers* to themselves to a far greater degree than at present, and that thus the demand for clothes (and the work, therefore, to be done) would be increased. Granted:—if they succeed and work well; which possibly they may. But

granted to this extent only ;—that this increase in the earnings (and therefore in the purchasing power) of the operative tailors can in no case exceed, as we explained fully in our last Paper, the *difference* between the gains of the middleman and capitalist after deducting interest of money, and the salaries of those parties who, under the associative system, would have to perform the functions of the middleman and the capitalist ; —a difference which, as we then showed, must amount to a much smaller sum than it is generally loosely taken at.

But all our representations are met in face by the assertion :—"This competition between the associations, which you suppose inevitable, we shall preclude from ever taking place. For our work will be only half done till we have united them all in one grand federal union, imbued with the true feeling of fraternity, and managed by delegates and chiefs fairly elected from the whole body. This central guild or governing body will decide upon the principle on which the work shall be divided among the different affiliated associations, will fix the amount to be done or the hours to be worked by each, according to the briskness or slackness of demand, the expansion or contraction of the market ; so that the aggregate of employment shall be equitably apportioned among all. In this way all disputes and all competition will be avoided."

This sounds plausible enough on paper : let us test it. Whence is to arise that wide knowledge, that delicate barometrical tact, which is to ascertain the

amount of production required by thirty millions of people, and the manner in which this is to be allotted among the various associations into which the 100,000 tailors of Great Britain are divided?. Where could be found the skill needed even to apportion it fairly and satisfactorily among the 23,000 journeymen of the metropolis alone? What chance is there that the allotments would be sufficiently wise and fair (even where guided by the best intentions) to content the several hundred or thousand allottees? How would it be possible to get so cumbrous a machinery to work? If the plan of fixing from time to time the hours of work were adopted,—as for the sake of simplicity and practicability would probably ultimately be the case, —how would this operate in different localities? The hours which were found more than ample to enable the London tailors to meet the London demand, might and probably would be quite insufficient to enable the Lancashire tailors to meet the Lancashire demand. The London men would then be for employing their over-hours in helping to supply the Lancashire demand; while the Lancashire men would be for working longer hours; and their disputes would be endless and pertinacious. Does any man in his senses, who knows what committees and boards of direction are, really believe that the regulation of supply to meet demand throughout a great country and an important trade, could ever be satisfactorily, permanently, or decently adjusted by a vestry or jury of *Prud'-hommes*? Or that the clumsy machinery which was sufficient to

guide and govern industry (in a fashion) during the middle ages, when population was scanty, and trade was in its infancy, would be practicable or adequate in these days of gigantic enterprise and complicated interests ?. How could such a board decide upon the question which would arise every year, as to how many new hands should be admitted into the cotton manufacture or the shoe trade ? How allay the indignation and heart-burnings of those whose sons were refused admission and condemned to idleness ? Truly the undertaking of such a government would be overwhelming, and the helmsman should be omniscient as well as omnipotent.

Then how are the regulations of this central committee to be enforced upon refractory and reluctant associations ? *How to be enforced against those*—an ever-increasing number, if our population goes on multiplying as it has done—*who belong to no association,* because they had found entrance into none,—the central authority deciding that they were not wanted ; or because, exercising the unquestionable rights of freemen, they declined belonging to any ? Have the Christian Socialists faced the idea of the shameless and tremendous despotism they will have to conjure up in order to ensure the working of their scheme ? Against the affiliated association, indeed, the law might fairly step in (if it were found physically possible) to compel them to adhere to their agreement, and submit to the decisions of the power they had themselves enthroned. But how are they to deal with those in-

dependent workmen who, either from rejection or from choice, have remained free and unassociated? Are they to be condemned to inaction and starvation? Are they to be prohibited from competing with the association? Are they to be forbidden to work except for a certain number of hours and at a prescribed rate of wages? Is the individual capitalist to be prevented from employing them on any terms which he and they —both of them free adults and British citizens—may mutually agree upon? If not—if they are to be free to work how they like, as long as they like, for whom they like, and at what remuneration they like, then all your boasted extinction of competition is at an end; the very basis of your scheme for revolutionising the existing arrangements of capital and labour crumbles in the dust; the essence of your panacea for regenerating society evaporates in air; and the golden age is as far removed as ever. If, on the other hand, these floating, isolated, unattached freemen are to be debarred from the first element, the alphabetic claim, of liberty—viz., the right to sell their own labour on their own terms and to a customer of their own choice; if the associated guilds are to be endowed with power to crush all outlying rivals and competitors, or to compel them to a forced and loathed incorporation—then you are not only casting out Satan by Satan's agency, but you are bringing seven worse devils than the old one into the chamber you have swept and garnished for your mad experiment; you are renovating and healing society by the instrumentality of its

deadliest malady and its most gnawing curse; you are summoning tyranny to do the work of justice; you are rashly calling in the worst foe to civilisation and to progress, to aid you in your glorious aims of indefinite improvement and universal emancipation; you are asking spirits from hell to do the work of angels from heaven,—and they laugh in scornful amazement at your blind temerity and your wilful and headlong self-delusion.

But we will imagine even this difficulty got over. We will conceive that—by the influence of some all-persuasive eloquence unknown to the real world, by some millennial change in human nature which would leave you nothing to desire or accomplish, or by some such all-powerful and all-embracing despotism as an earthly paradise would be dearly purchased by enthroning—competition is crushed, extinguished, or absorbed; and that all workmen in each department of industry work in concert and under the control and direction of a common head; that all the tailors, all the shoemakers, all the bakers, &c., form each one collossal establishment; and that all rivalry is thus precluded. The matter is settled as far as the workmen are concerned: *how is it with regard to the public?* The *producers* are provided for: *how will it fare with the consumers?* They have no longer any security, or any protection; society has escaped one peril, to rush upon another; it has exchanged open competition for one huge monopoly; it has foregone the solid cheapness secured by the candidature of

striving rivals, for such precarious substitute for cheapness as may charitably be assigned to it by the caprice of a body emancipated from all control, because from all competition;—the tailors, the shoemakers, the bakers, will charge whatever they please for their coats, their shoes, and their bread—and no man can gainsay them. The price may be high, the quantity scanty, and the quality bad; but the public has no remedy save in an appeal to the justice, the mercy, or the decency of the dispensing potentates. But this is not all: the evil will proceed with the accelerated and proverbially rapid pace of all retrogressive movements; as the price rises, the demand will fall off; as demand falls off, work will become scantier; the tailors making fewer clothes, will require less cloth; the occupation of the manufacturer diminishes; the shoemaker — to speak in the language of barter—will give the baker fewer shoes for his loaf; the baker will give the tailor fewer loaves for his coat; and throughout the community the rivalry of dearness will be substituted for the rivalry of cheapness, and the competition of trades for the competition of individuals.

"Wrong again, oh Prophet of Evil!" say the Christian Socialists; "our work is not yet completed; you must not seize upon it in its unfinished state, and then inveigh against its imperfection. Our task will only be wholly done, when we have united, not only all workmen of one trade, *but all trades* into one gigantic association, governed by the same unselfish and fraternal principles which prevail in each separate

guild. We shall provide one federal assembly for the whole community of interests, which shall prevent the mischief of monopoly, as the minor councils prevented the evils of competition, by fixing the rate of exchange between each department of industry; deciding how many loaves shall be equivalent to so many shoes; how much silk shall be given in exchange for so much cotton; how many hours' labour of the peasant, the artisan, the statesman, and the student shall be equivalent to a coat, a house, a shoulder of mutton, or a bottle of wine; for since all trade is barter, fixing such a price on each article as shall secure the public from the extortions of monopoly, would be fixing all these things."

Here we pause: we have brought the Socialists, step by step, to their last great panacea. We have put, fairly, into plain language the schemes and resources, the real nature of which they have disguised to their readers (and we believe to themselves) by vague and misty declamations. We have worked out their processes more clearly and more fully than they are in the habit of working them out for themselves. We have shown the course in which they are moving, the nature of the undertaking in which they have embarked, and the measures which they will be driven, and perhaps dimly expect to be driven, to adopt,—so as to preclude the possibility of any further self-deception which is not wilful. We have brought them to the alternative between failure on the one hand, and an appalling despotism on the other, at

which our instincts shrink back in horror; between all the evils of a crushing monopoly, or a colossal board for governing and deciding everything, the very faintest conception of whose functions makes imagination sink under their frightful magnitude and multiplied impossibilities. The bare statement of this ultimate resource is the death-warrant of the whole scheme which leads to it, ends in it, relies upon it. If there be any one who really believes such a huge board of rule feasible, or desirable if feasible, we bow before him; we have no arguments that can reach him; to us he is as invincible as the British army at Waterloo, which, Napoleon said, did not know when it was beaten. We are content to have brought our antagonists to unmask the real plan and ultimate means,—conceiving that the refutation of these lies in their simple announcement.

1851.

THE PROLETARIAT ON A FALSE SCENT.

ONE of the saddest spectacles on earth is the spectacle of misdirected energies and wasted resources. It is also one of the commonest, the most provoking, and the most disheartening. There is activity in abundance, there is ability, there is zeal to overflowing, there is industry, there are good intentions, philanthropy, and wealth, adequate to the extirpation of many of our social miseries, and the mitigation of many more, if only they were rightly applied, and worked with ordinary vigour and ordinary sense. But —what with want of philosophy and want of thought, want of patience and want of courage, prejudice which stops one road, fear which bars another, and the defects of administrative capacity inherent in our clumsy and stupid way of managing public business— all these means of rectification are thrown away, and social miseries spread, deepen and gangrene as before. Simple and obvious remedies are scouted or neglected, while the silliest and wildest ones are propounded, and gain a ready hearing from classes which are maddened by suffering; and, sick of the present, are prepared for any experiment, any struggle, any destruction, which promises, or seems to promise, a better future. We need go no further than our own doors for a startling

illustration. Our metropolis teems with ignorance and pauperism; its paupers reach 150,000; its totally untrained and uneducated children no statistics have yet accurately numbered; yet the sums annually distributed or available for charitable purposes would suffice to extinguish destitution, and to instruct the whole poor population of London. These funds amount to the enormous figure of seven millions and a half;* enough, as Dr Hawksley has shown—assuming that one-eighth of the population, or four hundred thousand persons, are wholly destitute and dependent on their fellow-citizens,—to allow eighty-five pounds per annum to every such family for sustenance and education. Yet the evils, against which all these vast resources are provided or can be directed, go on increasing from year to year. In this, as in many other matters, we endure so much evil and do so little good, because we manage so badly, and are so constantly sailing on the wrong tack.

None of us are more perpetually or more obviously on a false scent than the working-classes and their leaders; and in no case is error so mischievous or so formidable. The Proletariat—to adopt a much-needed foreign word—are right enough as to their miserable condition and sensations;—they are wrong only in the causes they assign, and the remedies they would apply. We sympathise with them in every fibre of our frame. We are ready to paint their wretchedly unsatisfactory

* "The Charities of London," by Dr Hawksley.

state and prospects in language as strong as any of themselves could use. We agree with them that their condition is an opprobrium to half the countries in Europe, and more especially to our own. Millions of them lead a life which intelligent beings should not consent to live, and exist in a condition of struggle and wretchedness which makes existence a burden and not a boon. They have a right to be discontented. They do well to be angry. Nay, more:—the rectification, speedy and thorough, of the evils of their condition, is the first duty of every statesman, and the most urgent necessity of every State; and all legislation which does not address itself, mediately or immediately, to this supreme purpose, is of secondary moment, and involves a postponement of higher to lower claims. The improvement, the rescue, the comfort, the well-being (in every sense) of the classes of which we speak, constitute the primary obligation of all who influence opinion or rule the country; first, because these classes are the most numerous; secondly, because they are often the most helpless; thirdly, because they are the most unfortunate and suffering;—and we share to the full in the burning indignation they express when questions vital to their interests are pushed into the background to let party conflicts have a fair field to fight in. So far we go along with the loudest and most violent of their leaders. But there we part company as widely as may be. Our indictment against these leaders is, that they systematically and persistently, and ignorantly even where honestly, divert

the people's attention from their real grievances and the true causes of their sufferings, and urge them to measures and objects either wholly irrelevant or certain to aggravate what they seek to cure. They are for ever hounding the people on a false scent, guiding them away from the right track, misinforming them or blinding them as to facts, misteaching them as to principles, and confounding their perceptions as to friends and foes.

The great central truth which lies at the root of the whole problem is that, with few exceptions and slight qualification, the mischiefs under which the working-classes suffer, and which most of them call for legislation—and many even for the overthrow of the actual social system—to remove, lie at their own door, and are remediable by and through themselves, and themselves alone:—not, indeed, without the co-operation of others, but, assuredly, still less without their own. It is this doctrine which it is, beyond all things, essential to convince them of, and to ingrain fixedly in their minds; and it is the wilful ignoring or denial of this doctrine which, in our opinion, constitutes the fundamental error and the great sin of the men who have got the ear of the Proletariat, and whom alone at present those classes listen to and trust. We have our own country chiefly in mind in saying this; but we believe it to be true also in the main not only of France, but of most of the really civilised countries of the Continent as well. To guard against misapprehension, we must add one remark. When we say that

most of the sufferings of the labouring classes lie at their own door, primarily at least, we merely mean that they are distinctly traceable to their own ignorance, perversity, insobriety, improvidence, and unthrift. How far their rulers and their betters are, even more than themselves—directly or indirectly, in the past or in the present—responsible for this ignorance, insobriety, improvidence, and unthrift, is a painful question which each man ought to ask himself; but the answer to which we forbear to discuss as not relevant to our immediate argument, which is confined to practical conclusions.

It is not long since we had a quiet conversation with an active member of the late Parisian Commune, who had taken refuge in this country after the final catastrophe. We endeavoured to obtain from him something like a precise statement of the objects for which so many thousands of French artisans, proletaires, and their half-educated but enthusiastic sympathisers, showed themselves so ready to fight, slay, and die—for which they were prepared to overthrow the established social hierarchy, and which they believed could be obtained by no other means. He was an intelligent and not at all an uncultured man; but he had never thought things out, and was full of watchwords and high-flown phrases, and in consequence it was difficult to nail him to any distinct definition or platform. But when by a little Socratic questioning he was run to ground, his view of the aims and inspiration of the originators of the Communal insurrec-

tion appeared to be this: 'The artisans and poorer classes of France—*i.e.* of Paris and the great towns—are ground down (*exploité*) by the capitalists, their employers; they wish to reap the fruits of their own labour; they wish, in fact, to work for their own benefit, and not for that of others; they think that all capital ought to belong to the State, and be lent out on moderate interest to associations of operatives, who would thus enter into the full enjoyment of the products of their own industry. They believe that only a Republic, of which the working classes should be the directors, would give them this result; and they know that a Republic of this sort can only be established by a revolution, and therefore they are willing to hazard everything, and upset everything in the cause of such a revolution.' Our interlocutor had never distinctly made out either the correctness of his premises, or the beneficence of his anticipated results, even if attainable or attained; but the dream was a grand one, and it had intoxicated his imagination. There were to be no more idle and luxurious profligates, scandalising decent livers by their orgies; no more bloated millionaires, buying power by the corrupt use of their ill-gotten gains; no more wretched toilers, ground to the dust by hard-fisted employers, forced to labour from the cradle to the grave, for the barest minimum of subsistence, scarcely knowing what true life is, and shaming Heaven by their misery and degradation. Every man should sit under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none daring to make him

afraid. What generous nature would not willingly lay down his life for the realization of such a dream?

We have no doubt that his account of the proletarian aims and state of mind was in the main correct, for Mr Frederick Harrison, in the 'Fortnightly,' gives much the same description:—

"They say that where in a common work labour is no less necessary than capital, and labourers are as worthy of the profits as managers, the system by which the gross result is appropriated to capital, and under which the self-indulgence of wealth soars to yet unimagined heights, whilst the area of misery, ignorance, and exhaustion sinks ever deeper, is a system which is doomed to end. And this their claim is good.

"Let us turn to the remedy they propose. The whole social force, they say, which so long has been directed by capital in its own interest, shall be directed by workmen in the interests of workmen. The laws shall no longer be made and administered so as to handicap the labourer in the race of industry. The power of the State shall step in to neutralise competition, and to restrain the selfish abuse of capital. The land, at any rate, they say, must be resumed by the State for the benefit of the whole community, and farmed on social, and not on proprietary, bases. Ultimately, in short, the whole existence of capital, and the ordering of the lives of the community, must be subject to the will of social authority."

It is the more important to understand that these *are* the views entertained by the French Communists —by those among them, at least, probably the main body, whose aims and inspirations were social and economic, rather than definitely and immediately political—because it is generally believed that the first impulse to the Parisian insurrection was given by the members of the 'International Working Men's Association,' of which we have heard so much in that

connection. In the beginning it is nearly certain that many of the leaders of the two movements, as well as their objects, were identical. This International Association has its central seat in London, and includes many thousands of English artisans among its members. It is true, no doubt, that the secretary of that body, who assumes to direct it, and to speak and write in its name, is a mischievous, hot-headed, and intemperate German, named Karl Marx.* It is true, too, that many of his English colleagues are disgusted at his violence, and resist his imperious behaviour, and altogether refuse to be dragged through the mire, and blood which have no repugnant qualities for him. It is true, again, that the aims of the English element of this Association, are principally and primarily business-like and economic—not political, republican, or revolutionary; and that the practical good sense spoken at their various congresses by the delegates from this country, offer a marked contrast to the vague and inflated declamation which passes for eloquence among their continental associates. But it is no less true that many of the current notions about the tyranny of capital and its unfair monopoly of profits, and its hostile position in relation to labour, prevail in England, as well as in France and Germany, though in a modified and less irrational shape; and it is certain that the most earnest efforts are being made by the foreign Chiefs of the International, to drag their

* The language, as well as the final date, shows that this was written in 1871.

English colleagues along with them in their political crusades—to commit them to their wild schemes and theories, and, in fact, to change the Association from a Trades-Unionist into a Revolutionary organ. If they should ever succeed, even partially, it will be an evil day for English industry and English peace.*

Meanwhile, the point we desire to seize hold of is

* See the manifesto recently issued by the General Council of the Association in London, which runs thus, its language betraying unmistakeably its un-English authorship :—

"CONSIDERING,

"That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of all class-rule;

"That the economical subjection of the man of labour to the monopolizer of the means of labour, that is the sources of life, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence;

"That the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means;

"That all efforts aiming at that great end have hitherto failed from the want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labour in each country, and from the absence of a fraternal bond of union between the working classes of different countries;

"That the emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists, and depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries;

"That the present revival of the working classes in the most industrious countries of Europe, while it raises a new hope, gives solemn warning against a relapse into the old errors, and calls for the immediate combination of the still disconnected movements;

"FOR THESE REASONS—

"The International Working Men's Association has been founded."

the absurdity that lies at the root of this wide-spread notion that capital is the oppressor and the enemy of labour, in place of being, as virtually it is, its offspring, instrument, and indispensable condition. The thinking class of British workmen, and nearly all their leaders, perceive this; while maintaining that, partly by custom, partly as they fancy, through favouring laws, and partly owing to the evil influence of excessive competition, capital manages always to obtain more than its fair share of the profits arising from the joint exertions of wealth and toil. But French operatives, especially the enthusiastic theorists, are slow to be convinced of our fundamental thesis. It was easy to point out to our Communalist friend that capital, in whatever hands (where not the result of mere robbery), is distinctly and certainly nothing more than the produce of industry and skill, either of the actual possessor or of those from whom the actual possessor has inherited it! that it is that portion of the produce of his industry which he or his ancestors have laid by instead of consuming—nothing more, in fact, than accumulated savings; that, as all capital arose out of labour, it is the rightful and inalienable property of the labourer who has first created it, and then stored it up; and that it would be just as fair for the State to lay hold of the savings of the frugal peasant or operative of to-day, as fast as he made them, as to appropriate, on any pretext, the capital of the rich man, which is simply *his* savings, or the savings of some one from whom he has received them by gift or by inheritance. It was

easy to remind him that this formidable imaginary foe, 'capital,' the accumulated savings of the labour of preceding times, was, in truth, not only the best friend, but the *indispensable* condition and material of all profitable industry—that which supplies it with its implements and its machinery—that which *enables it to wait* for the realisation of its profits, for the ripening of its crops, for the sale of its produce—which, in a word, gives the workman wages which are not yet earned, profits which are not yet made, bread which is not yet baked, harvests which are not yet reaped. Give the labourer what his thoughtless advocates demand, his share of the earth's surface, his seven acres or his ten, but deny him capital (which belongs to others who made and saved it, and which he cannot *claim* either as a boon or a right), and he will starve, the first year, on his fee-simple property. It was not a matter of much greater difficulty to show that it was unreasonable to expect, and would have been unjust in the State to concede, that this indispensable capital should be loaned or advanced to the labourer, without interest or consideration, or security for its repayment. Every labourer who has saved a few hundred francs on his own score, and wishes to invest it, sees this at once. But when we proceeded to point out to our Communist that all the private capitalist and employer does is to ask that very interest for his money which the State itself would have to require—that the return he obtains, and which he calls sometimes interest, but oftener profits, consists of three portions

(all undeniably equitable in character), namely—*first*, the mere annual value or rent of his accumulated savings, that which others are willing to give him for the use of what is undoubtedly his; *secondly*, the insurance for the risk he encounters by investing this capital in a fluctuating and uncertain business, or in lending it to men who might fail or defraud him; *thirdly*, the remuneration for *his* labour, skill, and knowledge in managing the business; and, finally, that if artisans began a trade or manufacture on a co-operative system, and on their own behoof, they would equally have to pay all these three considerations—that is, ordinary interest, security, or insurance, in some shape or other, and the salary of a managing superintendent;—when we pointed out these obvious considerations, in addition to those previously enumerated, he seemed altogether puzzled and astonished; for, never having really reflected patiently upon the matter, these things were as new to him as to most of his fellow insurgents. And when, to close the conference, we expressed a sort of mild and hesitating doubt whether—considering that any body of workmen who could lay by money and club it together, or could obtain credit, or give security in character or otherwise, might start in business for themselves, as many had done from small beginnings, and with considerable success—it was absolutely necessary, or even at all worth while, to overthrow a Government, to inaugurate a revolution, to shed life wholesale in a sanguinary civil conflict, in order to try a precisely similar experiment on a somewhat larger

scale, and in a decidedly more hazardous fashion—our friend was silenced and perplexed, but, to judge by his countenance, not one whit convinced.

We have always been favourable to the trial and extension of those co-operative partnerships, which, under one set of modifications or another, have been often suggested and occasionally carried out. They are feasible and they are serviceable. Where at all successful, or where even fairly tried, they do good in various ways. They instruct and practise the working classes in the conduct of business, its difficulties, its drawbacks, its multifarious but inseparable considerations. They disabuse their minds of the exaggerated estimates of the employers' profits and habits of monopolisation, so commonly entertained. They teach the operatives forethought; and if they do not actually augment their aggregate earnings very materially, they do so virtually and most effectually, inasmuch as funds which come to them at the end of the year in the shape of interest and profits, are far more likely than mere weekly wages to be husbanded. The system, too, will no doubt often enrich them directly, inasmuch as by becoming capitalists and virtually employers, they will reap their fair share of capitalists' and employers' gains. There is no reason whatever, so far as we can discern, why such partnerships should not in time become numerous, if not general. There are benevolent and just-minded employers in Great Britain. There are also fair, intelligent, and saving

artisans. These may easily combine on perfectly equitable terms. There is no reason why all employers should not be just and kindly, and all artisans economical, reasonable, and energetic. Then all employers and all operatives might become ostensibly and legally partners—just as they are, by the necessity of their position, virtually partners now. Neither is there any reason why working men, as their education rises and their habits mend, as they learn to control themselves and trust each other, should not combine for most industrial undertakings without a master, and be their own employers, and choose their own directors. When that time comes, the vexed and perplexing question of Labour *versus* Capital will have lost its vexations and perplexities, and will have been solved. Trades Unions and most other schemes and theories are but false scents, and only put off the advent of the golden day. How easy it would be for a large proportion of our artisans and skilled labourers in every line to become capitalists few reflect, and few even are allowed to know. Yet of the fact there can be no doubt. It can be proved by the testimony of all who are practically acquainted with the wages earned by competent and steady workmen in all the great industries of England where skilled labour is in request. Among the colliers of South Wales, for example, a man can earn 6s, and even 8s per day, and even more in special cases. The family income, therefore, cannot be estimated at less than £3 a week, or, say, £150 per annum. If it were not for the exhaust-

ing, unnecessary, and (as will presently be seen) noxious drafts made upon the means of these people by the Union funds—perhaps even *with* this drawback—a man might easily lay by £50 a year, and live in comfort on the remainder. A skilled operative in various branches of the iron trade can earn also £3 a week, with the aid of an assistant (often his own son), to whom he pays 10s or 15s. In the cotton trade, the more skilful and industrious hands can often earn 30s or 40s a week; and, as three or four of a family are often employed, their aggregate income often reaches 50s or 60s or more. And so on. Now in all these cases—and, though we do not say they are *average* specimens, they are assuredly very frequent and widely attainable ones*—the workman might in ten years have £500 in the Bank; and twenty such men, combining their savings, would be able to commence business or to join other industrials with a capital of £10,000, and a credit, owing to their character and their funds, which would readily command £5000 more at least. It is, therefore, obviously in

* We have now lying before us returns which have been furnished to us from various establishments of the staple industries of Lancashire. These show that the earnings of really good workmen range from 25s to 40s, and in a few cases to 50s a week. The weekly earnings of families, where, as is usually the case, two or three are employed besides the father, are often very large. The following are a few specimens, and not the highest we have heard of:—(1.) £4, 5s; (2.) £4, 7s; (3.) £5; (4.) £3, 17s 4d; (5, 6, 7, 8.) £3, 5s; (9, 10.) £4, 2s; (11.) £2, 18s; (12.) £3, 8s. Here are families with a regular income ranging from £150 to £250 a year, and *paying no income-tax.*

the power of industrious, steady, skilful, and frugal workmen to become capitalists before middle age; and it is their own fault if they do not.*

So much for direct proof. Now for still more irrefragable and convincing circumstantial evidence. We have seen what operatives might save. We will now show what they do waste. The annual expenditure of the population of the United Kingdom in fermented liquors and tobacco exceeds £100,000,000; that in beer and spirits only reaches £75,000,000. In England alone, the consumption of intoxicating liquors would allow an expenditure of £10 15s 6d to each adult male. Now, according to the best estimates that

* It is argued, with considerable justice, by Mr Thomas Wright (Journeyman Engineer), in "Fraser's Magazine" for October last, that the *income* of operatives cannot fairly be estimated from their weekly *earnings*, inasmuch as, owing to periods of slack trade, vast numbers of them are not employed, or at least not fully employed, all the year round. The argument is valid as far as it reaches, but the extent of its range is enormously overstated. There are, no doubt, many occupations where work is casual and fluctuating, but in the larger industries of the country full work is the rule, and "short time," the exception; and, moreover, the steady and reliable skilled workmen are the last to be thrown out, and are rarely unemployed. There are cases, of course, such as that of dockyard labourers in the metropolis, where occupation being dependent on wind and other varying influences, is necessarily uncertain; and others, such as railway, and to some extent shipbuilding industries, where periods of briskness and slackness alternate, and cause much mischief; but in these cases the wages in good times are extraordinarily high. On the whole we are satisfied that as regards the iron, coal, pottery, cotton, and woollen trades, we have not overstated facts. Still it must be admitted, without reserve, that periods of "flush and reaction" constitute one of the most unmanageable mischiefs with which labour in England has to contend.

can be formed, the expenditure of the working classes alone in drinking and smoking is not far from £60,000,000—of which £40,000,000 is mere extravagance and excess.* Every year, therefore, the working classes have it in their power to become capitalists *(simply by abstaining from wasteful and pernicious expenditure)* to an extent which would enable them to start at least 500 cotton mills, or coal mines or iron works, *on their own account,* or to purchase at least 500,000 acres, and so set up 50,000 families each with a nice little estate of their own of ten acres, in fee simple. No one can dispute the facts. No one can deny the inference. After this, what must we think of the sense or honesty or morality of the Proletaires who wish to confiscate the land or the capital of others, or of the leaders who would persuade them it would be right and wise to do so? Were we not warranted in saying that the fate and future of the working classes, their salvation or their ruin, lie in their own hands—and in no others?

Another false scent along which many popular orators and writers are leading the Proletariat of our country, is the division of the soil among a class of peasant proprietors. We cannot but regard this as an erroneous direction to give to the general aspiration after an improved condition, though one incomparably

* See "Companion to the Almanack," 1870.—"Self-imposed Taxation." See also "Companion" for 1871, for very valuable information as to Mutual Partnerships.

less unsound and less mischievous than that we have been considering. The leaders of whom we speak, often sincere patriots and earnest philanthropists, who seek to foster the "land hunger" in Ireland and to create it in England, unquestionably do much harm in the former country, and excite futile and extravagant hopes, even if they do not waste and pervert energy by turning it into a channel which is nearly certain to lead to disappointment, in the other.

We will deal with the case of Ireland first, as being far the clearest and simplest. The love of a poor man for his native country, even when it is mere ignorant attachment to the soil, to the scenes he is familiar with, to the cabin in which he was born, to the fields he has helped to till, has something in it, no doubt, at once respectable and touching, and occasionally even beautiful. It is a healthy instinct, even where it is nothing but an instinct. But under the circumstances of the country, it is indisputably one which every true friend to the Irish peasant should labour to enlighten and control, rather than to laud and exaggerate, as most of the priests and prominent "Nationalists" are wont to do. In all old countries, especially in thickly peopled and increasingly populous ones, and where agriculture is the main industry, those who wish to improve their condition and not deteriorate it—to rise, and not to sink—must seek their fortune in more prolific fields of industry. Middle-class Englishmen and mechanics and Scotch shepherds have come to know this, and why not Irish labourers? In plain

truth—so plain that no one who sees it fairly stated can resist conviction—it is the "land hunger" of the Irish cottier, or rather his hunger after *Irish* land, that keeps him poor. The wonder is how any Irishman, a friend to his countrymen, can wish to keep him at home.

Nearly every one (says Mr Maguire in his account of the condition of Irish settlers in Canada and the United States) had the same tale to tell. "I landed in New York or Halifax eight, ten, or sometimes only five years ago, without a shilling, or only with an axe; I went up country, worked for wages till I could purchase a few acres of my own; laid by and struggled hard, and now I have a good house and a comfortable farm, all my own property, of 200 or 300 acres, am worth £2000, £3000, £5000; and every one of my sons can be certain of doing just as well." Yet, observes his reviewer, these men when in their native country had, as a rule, only a miserable holding of three or five acres—for which they were often unable to pay rent—a wretched cabin, no hopes and no ambition. Now, compare for a moment the average, nay, the *certain*, prospect which awaits the sober and industrious Irishman who emigrates to America, with the *best* prospect he could dream of at home, were he ever so sober and industrious. Suppose Ireland "governed in conformity to Irish ideas," tranquil and prosperous almost beyond rational anticipation, manufactures introduced, wages trebled, "fixity of tenure" conceded, and what would be the brightest possibility

within reach of the ordinary Irishman? To earn 18s a week, to hold on lease (say) ten or fifteen acres of not very rich soil, to feel that his sons, if they did not emigrate, could hold only five or three, to live in a hovel comfortable, perhaps, according to his poor notions of comfort, to forget the future, or, if he remembered it, to remember it with deep anxiety. What lies before him ten days further west? In a very few years a position as landed proprietor on a considerable scale, a career, a political career if he desire it, yearly increasing wealth, ample plenty and comfort, and absolute freedom from all anxiety either for himself or his children. What country in the Old World, what government in Ireland, though "native" to the core, could offer him anything like this? And wherein lies the secret of the marvellous contrast? Not in government, not in race, not in religion, not in that he is oppressed in the one country and free in the other; but simply and solely in two circumstances which no people and no sovereign can alter:—that in Ireland men are redundant, and that in America they are scarce; that in the Old World labour commands only a shilling a day, and land costs £50 an acre; whereas, over the water, labour commands five or eight shillings a day, and land can be bought for five shillings an acre, or less. In one case *one day's* work can purchase one acre; in the other case not less than *three years'* work.

The case of England is different, though not in the feature essential to our present argument. We feel as

strongly as either Mr Mill or Mr Odger that the condition of the agricultural labourer in many districts is an opprobrium and a calamity to the nation. He ought not to be suffered to remain in it; and he cannot (unassisted) raise himself out of it. There is no need for exaggeration. The bare truth is too often bad enough. The wages farm-labourers depend on are a shame. The too general and inescapable prospect of the poor-house for their old age is a shame. The condition of their cottages is a shame. Their often having no cottages at all in the parish where they work is, perhaps, the greatest shame of all. But the enthusiasts who hope permanently or materially to mend this condition by facilitating the acquisition of land, by subdivision, by allotments of small acreages, in a word, by endeavouring to force into existence a class of peasant proprietors, leave out of their calculations two essential facts—two elements of the problem—alike indisputable and conclusive. We feel the full beauty of the pictures they draw of the smock-frocked labourer sitting at his own door, under his own fig-tree, looking out on his own ten acres, and with his ten children (which he is sure to have) lying on the sward around him. But when we think of the next step, and picture each of these ten children needing his ten acres also, the economic imagination breaks down before the unrealisable ideal. These peasants are *too thick upon the ground already*—that is the fundamental cause of their wretchedness: unless they emigrate they will become thicker still, and rapidly so—and what then?

This question must not be evaded, and as yet has not been answered.

The other element of the problem is this: When you have given the peasant his acre, or his five acres, or his ten, *how are you to secure that he shall retain it?* Short of a jubilee year like that which the Israelitish legislator is said to have enacted—short of declaring this peasant's farm inalienable, sacred from any claim, untouchable for any debt, unforfeitable for any negligence, misuse, or drunken incapacity, indivisible among any heirs—how is he to keep it? We once had a race of small proprietors in certain counties of England. They have all died out, drunk themselves out, been bought out. When common lands have been inclosed, what has always become of the few acres allotted in actual property to the commoners adjoining? In every case they have been sold to tempting bidders or forfeited for debts. Why shut our eyes to the fact that in densely-peopled countries land (like jewels) becomes a luxury only attainable to, or retainable by, the rich; it can only be purchased or possessed by those who have spare means, and *can afford themselves a superfluity.* The rich man can afford to be satisfied with 2 per cent. for his money (and land rarely yields more); the poor man must have 5 or 10 per cent. The peasant has inherited a farm worth £100 in fee simple, or he has given £100 for it, or a land society has enabled him to pay £100 by difficult instalments. He is proud of it, and attached to it. But a neighbouring proprietor, or a

retired tradesman who wants a villa and a garden, offers him £250, £350, £500, for it—is he likely to refuse the offer? Ought he to refuse? Men will always be at hand to give him for his acres more than they are worth: they want them for pleasure, not for profit. They desire them, as they desire jewels, for fashion, for beauty, not caring the least for the return they yield. Five hundred pounds an acre to the millionaire is nothing—to the peasant owner, it is wealth. Therefore, we say that, create as many peasant properties as you please, they will all be swallowed up in a few years by the natural process of sale—unless either peasants become fewer and better paid, and possessed therefore of a superfluity, able to afford themselves a luxury, and *an ostensibly bad or inferior investment* —or unless you actually forbid the sale of such properties:—that is, add a new and more stringent restriction to those which these very enthusiasts are seeking to remove—tie up land in a stricter settlement than any of those against which their clamour is just now so righteously directed.* Encourage peasants as

* It is a singular instance of the degree to which fanatical or sentimental devotion to one cherished idea can cloud the mental vision and disturb the logical consistency even of the clearest and most trained intellects, that reasoners of the stamp of Mr Mill should at one and the same moment question the right of private property in land and endeavour both to limit its absolute ownership and to confiscate one of the accessories which cause it to be so valued and cherished—viz. its almost inevitable rise in value with the lapse of time—and yet should seek so eagerly to create a class of peasant proprietors, and dwell so enthusiastically on the enormous economic, sentimental, and patriotic value ("magical" they call

much as you like to claim allotments and to rent or buy cottages, gardens, small farms; enable artisans to live in houses of their own, with paddocks and flower plots attached;—all that is good, very good, as far as it goes—but do not hope to regenerate or rehabilitate their class by the process. And do not forget the dangers which beset the process in its course and might be fatal to it when successful (unless population became absolutely stationary)—the danger, namely, of leading the labourer, like the Irish cottier, to use his potato fields as a staff instead of a crutch, and work only for himself and not for hire—and the certainty that when you have made all your labourers into peasant proprietors, the class of employers would have died out of the land.*

The various Land-law reformers of the day all assume as the foundation of their reasoning and the justification of their schemes, that the land of a country, by the undeniable conditions of the problem, must belong in proprietary right to the people of that country; because, as no man made it, it was the free and general gift of God to all men, and because, being limited in extent, the monopoly of it by some is an obvious wrong and injury to all others; and that,

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it) of the sense of absolute ownership which they would confer upon those peasants. It is scarcely less curious that the same men are arguing and labouring with the deepest earnestness to facilitate and cheapen the transfer of land in order to get it into the hands of a class in whose possession it could only be made to remain by the prompt enactment of the most arbitrary and severe prohibitive fetters against any re-transfer.

* See chap. I., p. 15.

therefore, those who hold it in actual possession can only rightfully do so on the ground that the system of private property in land is a more beneficial arrangement on the whole to the people than any other mode of joint or State tenure. Various plans, more or less well thought out—usually less rather than more—have been suggested for gradually putting the great mass of the population in possession of this their rightful inheritance. Mr Mill would at present content himself with directing the State to assume the ownership of waste lands, and (on such terms as might be arranged) of estates held by corporations, and of all the increment in the value of the soil arising year after year simply in consequence of the increase of numbers and aggregate wealth in the country. Mr Odger would gradually bring back land from the present owners by the produce of a special tax levied upon those owners, and then have the State let that land in small farms, and "at reasonable rents," to all and sundry—forgetting apparently, among a variety of other forgets, that as there would not be farms for all claimants, some would offer higher terms than others, and rents would soon become as "unreasonable" as ever. Mr Atherton would solve the matter by the simple plan of decreeing that every baby born should at once become entitled to an acre of land (again at a "reasonable" rent) in the parish where he first saw the light.*

* "Land Tenure Reform Association," Mr Mill's Inaugural Discourse. "Contemporary Review," August 1871.

Now, without caring to contest the fundamental premiss of these gentlemen in its abstract shape, we submit that a manifest and fatal fallacy lies at the root of their proposed practical applications of it—a fallacy which vitiates every conclusion they have drawn from their original thesis—a fallacy so obvious that, if they had ever patiently *thought out* their theory instead of merely playing at bo-peep with it, it could scarcely fail to have occurred to them. It is very true that man did not make the land or any portion of it, and therefore, it may be said, can have no right to monopolise its produce or its use. (It is equally true, however, that man—*this* man or his predecessors—did, by his labour, skill, or capital, make the productiveness of the chief portion of this land, and therefore may be held entitled to enjoy and to bequeath it. But this by the way). It is very true that the earth was given by the Creator for the benefit of the whole human race, and not of any particular class or favoured individuals. But it by no means follows—and yet this is universally assumed by these reasoners and forms the foundation of their whole argument—that any special portion of the earth was created for that special section of the human race which happens to be located there. A man *may* have a natural right to as many acres of the surface of the earth as he can cultivate, or as he needs to enable him to live. But it by no means is to be inferred from thence that he has a right to those acres *in any given locality*;—whether he grounds that claim on individual preference

or on propinquity, or on the fact that he first dropped from heaven in that latitude and longitude. He may be entitled to a note from the great land-Bank of the Universe;—there is nothing to show that he is entitled to a bank-note of this or that particular number. Mr Atherton holds, as we have seen, that he is entitled to it in the parish in which he was born —a claim manifestly absurd because impracticable, inasmuch as in a generation or two in several parishes, if not in all, every acre on this principle would be allotted, and none would remain for the next comer. (Who, therefore, must not be allowed to come,—for we always run upon this same rock at last). Mr Mill, —a thinker of different calibre and of a larger order— holds that a man is entitled to his native inheritance of acres in the land, kingdom, political or geographical division of Europe, in which he lives—*i.e.*, in Great Britain, in 'his country' as it is called;—and if in a large island, then by parity of reasoning, in a small one equally,—in the Isle of Man, in Jersey, in Alderney, in Heligoland;—if in England or Ireland, then why not in Devonshire, in the parish of Plumstead, out of the park of the Duke of Bedford? We may grant—for it is not worth while to dispute it, perhaps it would not be easy to controvert it—that man is entitled to claim a sufficient portion of the surface of the earth as a field for his labour—as long as there is land enough. We may even grant, to come nearer home and nearer the practical application of the doctrine, that every Englishman who needs it is

entitled to be helped to his ten. acres;—it is a long step further to admit that he is entitled to have them *where he likes.* You may perhaps even stretch a point, and concede for the sake of argument that he is entitled to have them somewhere in the British empire, if he prefers Australia to America, or one side of Lake Ontario to the other. But he is no more entitled to insist upon having his ten acres in England or in Ireland, than to insist upon having them in the parish of Havering, in the county of Surrey, in the climate of Penzance, or in the neighbourhood of London, because he has a personal predilection for any of those localities.*

The plain truth is that the primary assumption on which is based the entire fabric of the argument we are questioning is distinctly and notoriously false. Land

* In pursuing this argument to its legitimate conclusions, we find ourselves wrecked upon yet another rock. The citizens of one State—*i.e.*, the inhabitants of one 'country'—say France, have multiplied slowly out of providence, and have land to spare. The inhabitants of a neighbouring country, say Ireland, have multiplied recklessly, and have no longer any land to apportion to new comers. Is France to allow Irishmen to overflow into her boundaries and divide her 'superfluity' of soil among them? *Ought* he that hath two coats (one of which he had provided for next year) to give to him that hath none (because he pawned his only one for drink)? Yet if the Irishman may not claim French acres, why may the improvident parishioners of Winslow demand the acres of the prudent parishioners of the adjoining district of Evetshed? Why should I—who have toiled and pinched to get together fifty acres for my old age and my infirm wife or child—be forced to share them with my neighbour who never worked and never fasted, because the soil of the earth is limited?

is NOT limited in quantity. There is enough for all, and to spare. Our own conviction is that there always will be. There certainly will be for countless generations. Vast areas of the richest soil of the globe have not one man per square mile. The land in Canterbury parish may be limited; the land in Kent or Essex may be limited; the land of England may be limited. But practically the land of the world knows no limits; the land of the British empire virtually knows no limits;—it can be purchased of excellent quality at the rate of a day's labour per acre;—and the whole edifice of the argument of the Land and Labour League, foundation and superstructure, falls to the ground.

Another false scent by which the Proletariat have long been led astray is that of attempting to better their condition by Trades Unions and Strikes. Few of their errors have been more persistent or more pernicious. Few, it may be added, are more natural to uneducated men, ignorant of the principles of Economic Science. This subject has been so often and so fully discussed that we need only and very briefly point out the chief considerations which serve to show that this scent is inherently a wrong one, and must ultimately lead to harm. In the first place, these associations, so far as their object is to raise the wages of labour, aim at a result which either cannot be attained at all, or could equally well and surely be obtained without them. If Labour is redundant—if two men are look-

ing for one employer—no Trades Union, no power on earth, can permanently raise wages, or prevent them from falling. If labour is scarce—if two masters are looking for one man—no master can prevent wages from rising, and no union is needed to raise them. In the second place, Trades Unions, in order to gain their object in the face of adverse circumstances (and it is in such alone that their operation is even apparently required) can only succeed by means equally unjust, oppressive and violent. They have to prevent redundant labourers from competing with employed ones—to prevent those who have no work from offering to work on lower terms than others in order to obtain employment—to prevent those who are starving and anxious to earn 3s. a day, from replacing those who insist on 4s.* Of course they can only do this by bribes, by

* The injustice and iniquity of this has been brought in so clear and original in shape by a lady that we cannot do better than quote the passage here:—'The great employer must now weigh with himself, whether it will be better for him to give you what you want or to let you go. If he decides to let you go, you must remember that it was you yourselves who put him to the option, you must abide by your bargain, and go honourably to look for labour elsewhere, without seeking to molest him in any way, or to interfere with his future arrangements. "Ah, but," you will say, "the contest is not a fair one. He has got Capital to back him, and the moment we turn away, he can bring men from the north of Scotland or the south of England to fill our places." Now, just think for a moment: will his capital induce a man who is earning twenty-one shillings in Scotland, to come and work for him for twenty, or a man who is working nine hours elsewhere, to come and work ten for him for the same pay? Certainly not; his capital will only enable him to induce a man who is earning nineteen shillings, to come and take twenty from him: or a man who

persuasion, by threats, and in the last resort by violence. Historically we know that in all difficult cases—*i.e.*, wherever there is a real and chronic excess of labourers, often even without this excuse—violence is inevitably resorted to, leading on to crime, and frequently culminating in murder. Thirdly, strikes and unions, it has been clearly shown, can never (or scarcely ever) *pay*. Even in the few instances where

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is working eleven hours, to come and work ten for him. And as long as there is a man anywhere who would be glad of such a rise, what business in all the world have you to try and stand between him and his good fortune? What right have you to tell others, that they shall not be content with something because it did not satisfy you? *How would you like, if you saw a loaf marked 6d. in a baker's shop, and you wanted to go in and buy, how would you like if a rival baker placed himself in the doorway, and declared you should not buy the loaf under 7d. which was what he charged? You would say that he had no right to stand between you and your bread; and no more right have you to stand between any other man and* his *bread.* I have read in the papers how, at some of your meetings, your delegates have spoken of the employers bringing over men from abroad "to undersell the British workman," in a manner that implied that they rather considered this a shabby and unpatriotic proceeding. Now, frankly, is not that rather nonsensical? When you sit down to eat your loaf at breakfast, do you hesitate about partaking of it, because the corn was grown by Foreign Labour? If you want a cheap knapsack to put your clothes in, should you deem it unpatriotic to buy it, because it was of German make? Yes; but then you may object, this Foreign Labour was at any rate carried on on Foreign soil. Well then, if a German tailor lived at one end of your street, who would sell you a coat for fifteen shillings, and an English tailor lived at the other end of the street, who charged twenty shillings for his coat, would the idea that it was unpatriotic deter you from buying the coat from the German? I think not. You would say: "I shall buy where I can find the article that best suits my purse."'—*The Rights of Labour and the Nine Hours Movement.*

they temporarily raise the *rate of wages*, they never raise the actual *net earnings* of the operative. Even where strikes are successful, and extort the 5 or 10 per cent. augmentation demanded, the balance is almost invariably and inevitably against the workman—*i.e.*, the loss of wages while on strike, added to the constant contribution to the union funds, amounts to a sum larger than that of the increased wages during the period when the state of trade allows him to enjoy them.* In most trades, moreover, where these associations are in active operation, the tax levied on the employed workmen, in order to support in idleness the unemployed, and buy off their menaced competition, amounts to a permanent and very material diminution of his earnings; and it is only where there are such unemployed workmen that unions and strikes are needed to enhance wages or to keep them up. It is probably not overstating the case to say that in many trades every ten operatives have to maintain a possible rival out of their earnings. Fourthly, and lastly; it is undeniable that the operation of unions and strikes is, directly or indirectly (often both) to raise the cost of the article produced—indeed that is usually the avowed aim and expectation, and must be the result if the *capitalist* is to secure his remuneration. Therefore it is demonstrable that, as the effect is to raise the price of the article the workman *buys* (his house, his clothes, his shoes, his coal, &c.), and fails to raise

* 'Political Problems,' by the Author, pp. 110-134; where the whole question is concisely discussed in its practical bearings.

the *net* price of the article he has to *sell* (his labour) —these unions must be noxious and impoverishing to him. Yet, notwithstanding this unexpugnable process of reasoning, driven home as it has been by the disastrous experience of the operatives during scores of bitter conflicts, they are still persuaded or coerced into supporting these associations, which have driven away or ruined more trades than one already, and we fear will end in expatriating many others. The taxes levied by the unions are far heavier in most departments of industry than those levied by the State.

One other wrong scent remains to be noticed—one on which the masses have been more persistently, and sometimes wilfully, led astray than on any other. It has been the vulgar radical cry for years—too often echoed by politicians who were neither radical nor vulgar—that the people are ground down by heavy taxation; that much of their poverty is owing to extravagant government expenditure; that the revenue burdens of the country are shamefully oppressive, and that of these burdens the proletariat bear more than their fair share. These are common hustings cries; they form the staple of demagogic agitation; they are put forward, in the most ludicrous exaggeration, in all the pomp of figures by popular orators and financial-reform associations; yet, whatever may have been the case formerly, every one of these allegations is now demonstrably and notably untrue. Their fallacy was exposed, and the true facts of the case carefully worked

out, in an elaborate paper which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1860; and the whole question may be seen briefly elucidated in my "Political Problems," chap. xii. It is there proved incontestably that the taxation of the country is diminishing rather than increasing, in proportion both to numbers and to wealth; that England is less heavily taxed than either America or France; and that both the cost of collecting the revenue and the severity of its incidence are mitigated by our financial system to a remarkable degree.* It is further shown that the proletaires, or "wage-class," constituting more than *three-fourths* of the population, pay less than *one-third* of the taxes; and "that taxation is now so equitably apportioned between the rich and the poor (property and proletarianism), that the former pay more than *six* times as much in proportion to their numbers, and *half as much again* in proportion to their means." It is proved, too, conclusively, that "no necessary of life is taxed;" that the working man need not pay to the State revenue one shilling unless he pleases; that if he does pay anything, it is because he chooses to indulge (like the rich man) in superfluities and luxuries, *i.e.*, in articles which are not essential either to health or strength. And, finally, there is brought out an indisputable but somewhat demoralising consideration which, whatever other effect it may produce, ought at least to shut the mouths of the

* See also *Contemporary Review*, September 1875.—"Right use of a Surplus," p. 549.

popular declaimers of the fallacy we are demolishing, namely, that large sections of the working classes are directly enriched, instead of being impoverished, by a lavish Government expenditure; "that the utmost amount of retrenchment that could be practically carried out would not relieve their taxation more than a penny or two per week, while an increase in Government activity and outlay would increase the wages of hundreds of thousands of them several shillings per week. They know well enough—what the hustings advocates of economy seem always to forget, and what some of its most zealous preachers deliberately keep out of view—that three-fourths at least of the expenditure on the army and navy goes directly or indirectly into the pockets of their class; in the pay and keep of soldiers and sailors, in wages to artificers, in naval and military stores which they manufacture, in gunpowder which they fabricate and the materials for which they procure, in arms which employ the factories at Birmingham and Enfield, and the iron works in Staffordshire and Lanarkshire. It may be broadly stated, in short, that, of every additional four millions laid out on the national defences, in reference to which the Tories are said to be so wasteful, three millions are *paid* by the middle and upper classes, and are *spent* in the wages of labour." *

Few facts show more clearly how little, in reference to this question, the proletariat grasp or consider the

* "Political Problems," p. 336.

simple truth of the case, and how systematically their chosen instructors abstain from enlightening their ignorance or correcting their misconceptions, than the recent clamour against the burden said to be laid upon the people by the expense of royalty in Great Britain. The entire sum annually paid to Her Majesty and other members of the Royal Family (exclusive of the revenue of the Duchy of Cornwall, an appanage) is, including the last dotations of Prince Arthur and Princess Louise, just £517,000. Now, as we have seen that only about one-third of the revenue of the country is levied on the working classes, who number 23,000,000—their share of this burden is not quite *twopence* a-head, or tenpence for each family of five—equal to the cost of about five glasses of beer per annum. At the same time, as we have shown above, they spend more than three hundred times this sum in drinking and smoking. The pauperism of the land eats away ten millions yearly, and the monarchy only half a million. Yet the complaint of the labourer is concentrated upon the latter. *Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas.*

Early in October 1871, the public was startled by the announcement of a new social alliance said to have been entered into between the recognised leaders of the working classes and certain Conservative Peers and eminent politicians of the Lower House of Parliament, with a view of securing the attainment of a number of objects which the people have much at heart. It was alleged that the senators, whose names were given, had

agreed to a programme, drawn up by some persons well known as connected with extreme popular movements, and had pledged themselves to use their best exertions towards carrying it out by legislative measures. Many of the politicians named, indeed, took immediate steps for the disavowal of any such agreement, and repudiated most of the schemes in question; and it appeared that the whole affair was due to one officious and unauthorised individual, who seems to have mystified, if not misunderstood, both of the parties between whom he was attempting to negotiate.* But the programme,

* It is, however, only fair to state that Mr Scott Russell's explanation (published since the above was written) exonerates him from participation in the graver errors of the programmists. Indeed, few things can illustrate more clearly into the hands of what mismanaging leaders the organisation of the working classes has fallen, than the comparison of Mr Scott Russell's original sketch, as he gives it, of the *wants* of the operatives with the *demands* of Messrs Potter & Co. in the form assumed under their manipulation. Mr Scott Russell says :—"Six months of last year I devoted to the purpose of studying the real evils which depress the condition of the working men. I conversed with the least educated and the most educated, the less skilled and the more skilled, with the object of learning, not their imaginary grievances or their political fancies, but the real griefs of their daily life. I was soon able to reduce these by careful classification to the number of twelve, and afterwards of seven, and it was thus that the seven points of our movement were not the invention of any one, but grew naturally out of the actual condition of English society. The seven evils which we thus discovered were—I. The want of family homes, clean, wholesome, and decent, out in pure air and sunshine. II. The want of an organised supply of wholesome, nutritious, cheap food. III. The want of leisure for the duties and recreations of family life, for instruction, and for social duties. IV. The want of organised local government to secure the well-being of the inhabitants of villages, towns, counties, and cities. V. The want of systematic,

consisting of seven resolutions (selected, we are told, most carefully out of twenty-four) has been published, and is well deserving of attention, as indicating, almost for the first time, some correct though rather vague perception on the part of the artisan chiefs of the real *needs* of the working class, and of the objects to which their demands should be directed; while curiously crude in their conception of the form in which those claims should be urged, of the modifications requisite to render them rational or just, and of the means by which alone they could practically be worked out. The text of the resolutions is as follows:—

"1. The families of our workmen shall be rescued from the dismal lanes, crowded alleys, and unwholesome dwellings of our towns, and placed 'out in the clear,' where, in the middle of a garden, each family shall have its own detached homestead, and where in wholesome air and sunshine, they may grow up strong, healthy, and pure, under the influence of well-ordered homes. 2. There shall be created a perfect organisation for the self-government of counties, towns, and villages, with power for the acquisition and disposal of land for the common good. 3. A day's labour shall consist of eight hours of honest work. 4. In addition to schools for elementary education, there shall be established schools for technical education and practi-

organised, teaching, to every skilled workman, of the scientific principles and most improved practice of his trade. VI. The want of public parks, buildings, and institutions for innocent, instructive, and improving recreation. VII. The want of the adequate organisation of the public service for the common good."

cal knowledge. 5. Places of public recreation, knowledge, and refinement shall be established and maintained as parts of the public service. 6. Public markets shall be erected and maintained in every town for the sale of goods of the best quality in small quantities at wholesale prices. 7. There shall be provided a great extension and re-organisation of the public service on the model of the Post-Office." *

It would not be easy to put forward *aims* in themselves legitimate and desirable, in a more undigested form, or in one more open to honest criticism and objection. Let us take them *seriatim*—it will precisely answer our purpose to do so, as they will bring us at once upon the track of those *true scents* which it is the object of this paper to point out, in contradistinction to the false scents which, in our opinion, the working men of England have hitherto pursued.

But first we must notice a singular omission, strongly suggestive of the inference (we believe a correct one), that this programme proceeds not from the real heart of the artisan class, but from their political or professional leaders and spokesmen. Not a word is said as to the regulation of the liquor trade; yet all who know the internal lives and sentiments of the working classes, especially in the manufacturing districts, are aware that this question not only affects their condition far more directly and powerfully than

* Mr Odger's name does not appear among the working men's leaders who concocted this programme, but the names of Messrs Howell, Applegarth, Hughes, Broadhurst, and Potter do.

any other, but lies nearer than any other to the hearts of the best and most thoughtful of their order. They fully recognise that drunkenness is the bane of their people, that it stands incomparably more than any other influence in the way of progress, family comfort, and domestic respectability; that, but for it, squalid poverty might be almost unknown among them. They long to be protected against the temptations to drink which beset them on every side, and against which the weaker and perhaps more numerous brethren have not moral strength to protect themselves. They ask to be protected against those adulterations which are sometimes almost as noxious as the drink itself. There is no question as to the extent or the consequences of this evil influence. No one doubts them; no one is ignorant of them; no one has been suffered to be blind to them; no one can exaggerate them. Yet in a programme professing to contain the well-considered objects, demands, and social purposes of the masses, and the matters on which they call for legislative aid, not one word is said upon the subject; not a sentence indicates that this point, of all others, needs parliamentary intervention on their behalf; and moreover, never yet, so far as we know, have any of the recognised organisers, or self-named chiefs of the working class, directed the powers which their organisation would enable them to wield, either to demand such a reform and regulation of the liquor traffic as would meet their wants, or to aid, with the least unanimity and determination, the attempts volunteered from time

to time by private members of Parliament, or by different Administrations, to grapple with this prolific and pervading evil. The practical difficulties in the way of legislative action on the subject are, we know, immense; it is not easy to feel more confident as to what ought to be done than as to what can be done; false steps, no doubt, might be only one degree less mischievous than helpless inaction; but this much is certain, that if either statesmen, or the leaders of popular organisations, or the sincere friends of the working classes in public life, or even the great body of the inarticulate masses themselves, were adequately alive to the paramount urgency or the fearful dimensions of the matter, Parliament would be compelled to face it and deal with it, without a year's delay, and to deal with it in such a resolute and earnest spirit, with such a concentrated and persistent purpose to arrive at a prompt and beneficent solution of its difficulties as would overcome alike all habitual inertia, and all interested opposition. What is wanted—what the labouring men have a right to demand—is not that this or that measure shall be passed, or this or that panacea adopted, but that the question shall be grappled with, and not let go till it has been mastered.

Next to this in importance stands, no doubt, the question of decent and healthy dwellings within reach of their work, alike for the rustic labourer and the city artisan. This is about the truest scent they can pursue. It is probably, after the last-named, their most indispen-

sable need. The want of such dwellings lies at the root of much of their wretchedness. The absence, or rather the unattainability, of them constitutes a most legitimate and crying grievance, perhaps the greatest of all. It is impossible, we consider, to repudiate their claim, not to have such houses *provided for them*, but (what is a very different thing) to be *enabled to procure them*, to have them within reach of practicable exertion. We need not waste words in pointing out the *essential* character of this necessary of life —a home of some sort in which an existence not wholly unworthy shall at least be possible. This is not asking much. To the want of it, as we all now know and admit, may be traced much of the vice and squalor and much of the destitution of our population —bad health, impure living, craving for drink, frequentation of public-houses and gin-shops, and the early death of the bread-winner, spreading epidemics, constant sickness, and all the wretchedness which these involve. This ground has been gone over, even to nausea, assuredly to conviction, in volumes of evidence innumerable. Of course the *form* which this desirable object and legitimate claim is made to assume in the programme we are criticising is extravagant and absurd, and would seem expressly devised to repel sympathisers, and to expose the shallow unreason of its propounders. But the essence of the claim—still more the general character of the aspiration—is irrefragably just. The real need of the labouring class, whether in town or country is, that they shall find

suitable homes *within reach of their daily labour.* The foolish declaimer who drew up the demand "that the families of our workmen shall be rescued from the dismal lanes, &c., of our towns, and placed out in the clear in the midst of a garden," and so on, might have perceived, if he had given a moment's thought to the matter, that he was requiring for the vast mass of his clients—the entire artisan and handicraft class of our citizens—that their houses should be *far removed* from the scene of their daily labour, precisely the opposite of what they want and wish. But passing over all the nonsense of this framework, the nucleus of the claim is neither irrational nor unjust. Without wishing to lay down any general principle too broad for the occasion, and perhaps, therefore, open to controversy, it does not seem much to allow that, in a general community such as ours, the State, the municipality, the central, local, or legislative authorities, should do that for the people which is needful for their good and for the welfare of the nation, and which, from the nature of the case, *they cannot do for themselves.* The labouring poor, whose position and wants we are considering, form part of the community, and the largest part; they contribute to the funds of the State and help to choose its rulers, and they pay municipal rates and taxes in some shape or other. The principle, no doubt, may be mischievously stretched or misapplied, but its correctness is assumed in every public and administrative department. Roads are made by the local bodies or the central government, because in-

dividuals cannot make them for themselves, or make them so well. So with the Post Office, so with the police, so with the national defences. Now it is obvious that the working classes in large towns (and we may take the instance of the metropolis as a crucial and a flagrant one), cannot provide themselves with decent, or wholesome, or suitably placed dwellings, however sober and industrious they may be, and however willing they may be to pay a fairly remunerative rent. They cannot purchase sites, they cannot lay on water, they cannot secure good air, they cannot provide drainage. They are constantly dispossessed by "improvements," demolitions,* new streets, new railroads; and they cannot, unaided, re-establish themselves in other suitable quarters near their work. They are, therefore, at the mercy of the harpies and the fates. They are simply helpless in these matters. What is this but to say that in matters essential to their well-being, essential to their workmanlike efficiency, essential to the interests of the community, within their reasonable and fair requirements, within, therefore, the range of simple justice, they are utterly powerless to obtain what yet they are perfectly ready to earn? They need, in a word, and have a perfect right to ask for, things which can only be procured by combined effort, by exertions directed by some controlling authority—that is, by the municipality, or the

* It is calculated that in the last ten years upwards of 150,000 persons have been thus unhoused in the metropolis.

State, or some association acting under the auspices of the State.

Now, not only is there nothing foreign to sound political economy in this popular demand for decent dwellings for the vast labouring population of our cities,* but in the measures required for carrying it into practical operation there need be nothing at all at variance with our recognised principles and mode of action. We have laid rates for providing drainage, and we have languidly and ineffectually ventured on legislation to secure something like decent sanitary arrangements in the crowded quarters of the metropolis. We have long admitted and habitually act upon the doctrine that, private property, in land and buildings, may be taken from the owners at fair prices for public objects, for any purpose, in fact, which their promoters can persuade the Legislature will be useful. Nay, we

* One of the most substantial grievances of which the rural labourers have to complain is suffered at the hands of those landed proprietors who, with a view of keeping down the poor-rate in their parishes, have pulled down or refused to build cottages on their estates for the labourers habitually employed thereon; thus forcing them to live in other districts and to walk long distances to their daily work. It is difficult to characterise this heartless proceeding too severely. Something was done three or four sessions ago to remedy it by Mr Charles Villiers' Union Chargeability Act; but we believe the evil still prevails in some counties, and few evils are graver or more indefensible. The provision of suitable house accommodation for the agricultural population, of such a description as the programme we are considering specifies would be very easy, and we confess appears to us to be among the most obvious and peremptory social obligations of the landed proprietors of England. Many, indeed, and those among the most extensive, have nobly recognised it and fulfilled it.

have been far too lax in this matter, and have often expropriated most unwilling owners and handed over their property to associations who could only plead their desire to carry out what promised to be a profitable commercial speculation. We have too often acted in such cases recklessly, unprofitably, unjustly, and for no adequate good to the community. Now, what we habitually do for providing means of locomotion for the richer classes and the furtherance of commercial enterprise, why should we not do for the far more important and more urgent purpose of putting decent dwellings within the reach of the crowded labouring population of our cities—more especially of London. No railway company can prove a preamble half so forcible or half so indisputable; for what is saving half-an-hour of time to busy citizens, or facilitating goods traffic, in comparison with rendering a million of workmen comfortable, healthy, prosperous, sober, and respectable—or enabling them to become so. That one set of the schemes *pays*, and that the other will not or may not, even if a decent objection would not be a true one. Railway companies on an average do not yield a five per cent. return;* and it has been proved by some at least of the Associations for the Improvement of the

* The *interest on capital expended* in the last twenty years, 1851-1870, has never once reached 4½ per cent., and in seven of those years has fallen below 4. The *dividends* of several lines have reached upwards of 5 per cent., but in these cases they had borrowed much of their capital at lower rates of interest.—(See Supplement to "Economist," March, 1871.)

Dwellings of the Metropolitan Poor, that a steady dividend of five per cent. can be obtained under sound and business-like conditions of administration.* Therefore, we say, no valid objection can be raised to the proposal that henceforth Parliament should grant powers to companies having such an object in view, to purchase land and suitable sites in the heart of the metropolis, as readily and as amply as they have parted with them to railway companies. Nay, more: it is not easy to say why, if such companies were not forthcoming in sufficient numbers, or with sufficient capital to meet the urgent necessities of the case, the State or the City, acting in the interest of the community, should not lend money to them at any rate of interest beyond that at which they can borrow it, *plus* an addition for the cost of management; or on such terms as they have ere now and repeatedly loaned public funds to private proprietors, especially in Ireland, for drainage of estates and other improvements.† We are

* See the Reports of these several societies, especially that connected with the respected name of Sir Sydney Waterlow. A general account may be read in a valuable paper by Mr Plummer in the "Companion to the Almanac" for 1871.

† If we are not misinformed, the Corporation of London has already broken ground in this direction; and the "Improved Industrial Dwellings Company" has already borrowed £125,000 from the Public Works Loan Commissioners to assist their operations But all that has yet been done only provides house-room for about 10,000 persons, not by any means either all of the artisan class; and we need dwellings for many hundred thousands. The name of the Duke of Westminster ought not to be forgotten in speaking of those who have been sedulously and judiciously awake to the "duties of property" in this connection.

not generally advocates for multiplying State action and intervention where it can be avoided; but in a case like this, we should not greatly object to some initiation, at least tentative and experimental, by the Government itself. Not that we believe this will be necessary; but we are certain that, in scarce any instance, could so strong a case be made out for departing from a rule, which we admit is usually a prudent and a sound one.

Thus much, at least, we may say with confidence—and it is amply sufficient for the practical inferences we desire to enforce, and it is, in every point, irrefragable:—that scarcely any social object is so great, so urgent, or so beneficent; that the vast proportion of the working classes (and the class even below them), in London, are destitute of suitable and wholesome dwellings, and can by no effort obtain these for themselves; that such dwellings can be provided so as to pay a fair interest for the sums expended; that there are extensive localities in central and crowded quarters where sites could be obtained, and where it would be most desirable to obtain them—some even where the expropriation of the existing occupiers and owners would, of itself, be a vast public gain; that the needful measures cannot be carried out with the needful rapidity (even if at all) without Parliamentary powers, nor perhaps without Government action;—and, finally, that, in conceding this, we shall neither be violating any sound principle, nor introducing any novel or un-

sanctioned practice.* One thing is absolutely undeniable:—that if half the millions expended during the last twenty years in starting and carrying out *unprofitable* railway undertakings, and half the land taken under the authority of Acts of Parliament for such projects, had been devoted to providing fit and comfortable dwellings for the labouring poor of our great towns, much waste of capital would have been avoided, larger money interest would, on the average, have been realised, an enormous proportion of the people—2,500,000—would by this time have been satisfactorily housed, and a change moral, social, and sanitary would have passed over the aspect of Great Britain such as imagination can scarcely paint in too glowing colours.

It is not necessary to discuss at length the second, fourth, fifth, and seventh paragraphs of the Programme. We all of us desire an improved system of local and municipal self-government. The absence of such a system is among our most pernicious social incapacities; though, as to the mode and the means of securing it, considerable differences of opinion and crudity of views still prevail. As to the power to be given to such municipal authorities "for the acquisition and disposal of land for the public good," we must know more dis-

* Since this was written a most important, though inadequate step, has been taken by Mr Cross' "Artisan Dwellings Act" of last session, and Glasgow has shown us the wonders that may be worked by sagacious and courageous municipal action under parliamentary power.—(See Miss Octavia Hill's brief account, "Homes for the London Poor.")

tinctly what it means before we can pretend to form a judgment as to its desirability. "Technical and practical, as well as elementary education" we, equally with the framers of the Seven Resolutions, hope to see ere long placed within the easy reach of all classes. Possibly taxes levied upon all could scarcely be applied, if applied judiciously, to an object more directly or indirectly serviceable to all. "Places of public recreation, instruction, and refinement" we too should wish to see "established and maintained" in all quarters. Whether they should be maintained as parts of the public service is a secondary question, about which we need form no opinion at present. Much has already been done by the liberality of individuals in many districts towards the creation of such parks and museums as are pointed out by the resolution, and, in some instances, these have been aided by public funds; and we believe that even now there is no law to prevent municipal bodies from meeting the wishes of their respective citizens in this direction. What precisely is meant by "the extension and reorganisation of the public service on the model of the Post Office" we confess we do not understand. It may, if properly defined, turn out to be a desirable object; but assuredly it cannot be regarded as an urgent social want.

But the third and the sixth resolutions demand more detailed examination. "A day's labour shall consist of eight hours of honest work." Now, have those who urge this claim, or indeed the claim for any specific

limitation of the hours of labour to ten, nine, or eight, ever taken the trouble to analyse their own scheme, or considered the means, the feasibility, or the cost of realising it,—or the purposes to which it would be turned? We concede most cordially the importance to the working man, as to all others, of some daily and weekly leisure from the ceaseless toil of mere bread-earning. Few have preached this doctrine earlier or more zealously than ourselves. It is most desirable that the men should have time for reading or any favourite occupation, the women for learning and practising housewifery, and all for rest and recreation. Therefore it would be desirable that the regular working day should consist of not more than eight or nine hours, *provided* the time thus gained were turned, or were likely to be turned, to good account,—*provided* also that productive labour could be so limited without reducing earnings below the amount needed for comfortable and healthy sustenance,—and *provided* further that the cost of production were not so enhanced by the limitation of the productive period, as to imperil the prosperity or curtail the extension of the special industry to which it was applied. These are the indispensable conditions to the solution of the problem and the attainment of the end. Let us see a little more fully what they involve and what they postulate.

A reasonable amount of leisure may be, and ought to be, a blessing; but if ill used it is not a blessing but a curse; and if a blessing, like all other blessings,

it must, as Burke says, be "bought with a price." No one acquainted with the average mental and moral condition of the mass of our labouring population, whether metropolitan, mining, or manufacturing, will contend that *at present* the gift of three or four hours of added leisure per diem would be in any sense a boon. Education and civilisation must be further advanced than they are yet, before anything but almost unmixed evil would be the result. The instance of the colliers and other miners in South Wales, whose strike has so recently brought them prominently before the public, is a case in point, and though perhaps an extreme, is a most instructive one. They are among the claimants for a day of eight hours: their wages are enormously high; their work while it lasts is unquestionably severe. Yet what is their position, to their own great injury and the indescribable annoyance of their employers? They idle more or less completely, as was admitted and blamed by one of their own leaders, the first part of the week (too often prolonging or resting after the Sunday's debauch), and then on the remaining days work nearly to the extreme of physical exhaustion.* Here it is not the masters, but the men who stand in the way of the adoption of an eight hours' system.

* "Report of Miners' Conferences at Merthyr Tydvill" in October. The last year or two (we write at the end of 1875), operatives of most classes have had leisure enough, and short enough hours of labour. Who, and how many, have in any sens profited thereby?

In many cases, certainly in that of the colliers, a limitation of the working day to eight or nine hours is within the reach of the labourer, if only he wishes it and is willing to purchase it at the necessary cost and sacrifice. It virtually lies within the option of the men themselves. In other cases it does not lie within their power to obtain or within that of their employers to grant. A very few words will make our meaning clear, and establish our dictum beyond question. But let us call attention *in limine* to the significant fact that the demand for an eight or nine hours' labour-day means two very different things, according to the parties by whom it is put forward. Among the workmen themselves, in their various strikes, and in most recent discussions with the masters, it means not longer leisure, not that work should cease after eight or nine hours, but simply *that overtime* (*i.e.*, pay at a higher rate) *should begin then.* It meant that in the mouths of the Newcastle Engineers, as was obvious from the terms on which the dispute was ultimately compromised. In this shape it may be perfectly legitimate and admissible, or it may not; but in either case it is neither more nor less than a demand for an advance of wages, put forth under the thinnest of disguises,—indeed scarcely with a pretence of disguise, for the mechanics in the case referred to avowed their perfect readiness to work whatever over-hours were necessary from the condition of the trade, provided only they were more highly paid for them. In the mouths of the political or ostensible leaders of working men's

organisations, however, the demand really signifies, and resolves itself into, a claim to be paid *ten hours' wages for eight hours' labour, i.e.*, for shorter hours and the same pay,—cloaked under the fair seeming of a desire for leisure for mental improvement and wholesome refreshment. Well: this is a legitimate claim too,—provided only it be honest, feasible, and not indirectly or subsequently pernicious. Our sole ground of objection—waiving the frequent insincerity of it—is that its concession is simply *impossible*, without incurring or risking consequences which the working classes could not endure, and sacrifices which they will not make. The whole question lies in a nutshell:—the facts cannot be impugned, and the inferences cannot be escaped.

A reduction of the hours of labour in any trade may be established, and, as a rule, can only be maintained, *on condition that the cost of production shall not thereby be enhanced.* This is the *sine quâ non* which must always be borne in mind. The quantity of coal, iron, calico, silk, boots, which can be produced in eight hours is considerably (if not quite *proportionately*—which may be a disputable point) less than can be produced in ten hours. The wages of labour, interest of capital, wear and tear of machinery, and sundry contingent expenses (nearly or quite the same for eight hours as for ten), have to be spread over this smaller amount of production, and must consequently increase its cost. Now, if the cost be thus increased, foreign nations will soon produce cheaper and undersell us, in

the articles in which we come into competition with them,—and where will our trade and the wages of our artisans be then? And who, that knows how vast a proportion of our industries are supported by foreign demand, dare face the slightest risk of such a result? And who, well acquainted with the subject, does not know that this risk is something very like an imminent certainty? Moreover, putting out of view foreign trade and the export demand for our goods, it is evident that whatever enhances the price of any one article of consumption, takes an increased sum out of the consumer's pocket, and *pro tanto* diminishes the purchasing power of the labourer's wages, and so far impoverishes him. And if the price of coal is to be thus enhanced by the shorter hours of the collier, why not that of calico by the shorter hours of the weaver and the spinner? Why not that of houses by the shorter hours of the builder, the carpenter, the bricklayer, and the plasterer? Why not that of clothes and shoes by the shorter hours of the tailor and the shoemaker, and so on? So that, obviously and undeniably, the first and most certain effect of a general limitation of the hours of labour must be a general advance in the price of everything which labour produces, and *which the labouring man buys.* His wages may be the same, but they will not buy nearly as much.

This has been so clearly put by a most intelligent friend of the working classes, in one of the soundest and cleverest Pamphlets * we have seen on the subject,

* "The Rights of Labour," by a Lady.

that we cannot do better than quote a passage bearing on this argument:—

"My 'few words' have grown into many, and I have not yet spoken to you about the Nine Hours Movement. What I have to say about that will be very brief. If the masters agree to grant you what you have asked for, can you afford to take it? Of course, what you think right for yourselves, you must think right for other people, if they want it. If you think it right that you should only work nine hours yourself, you cannot deny that the tailors, the shoemakers, the bakers, the cotton-spinners, the power-loom weavers, the carpenters, &c., &c., have the right to do likewise. This will mean that everything you buy will cost you one-tenth more for labour than it does now. The man who shears ten sheep will only shear nine, and the price of his labour must be divided over nine fleeces instead of ten. The man who cards, can only card the wool of nine fleeces instead of ten. The man who spins, can only spin the wool of nine fleeces instead of ten. The weaver can only weave the wool of nine fleeces instead of ten. The wages of all these must be divided over nine fleeces instead of ten, and finally, the tailor who makes the coat can only make nine coats instead of ten, so that when you come to buy the coat, you see how much dearer it must be, owing to the increased cost of labour on it throughout. It will be the same with houses: for all the labour required in building them, and collecting and preparing the materials, one-tenth more must be paid. Not only will this drive up rents, but, as the landlord who lives upon the rents, will have to pay one-tenth more for the labour expended on all that he consumes, he will charge more for his houses. Again, if we produce less than before, we shall have less to exchange with foreign nations; and tea, and corn, and cotton will be dearer. The question then is, Can you afford to reduce your labour to nine hours?"

But, we may be asked, is it not possible to reduce the hours of labour without thereby thus mischievously enhancing the cost of production, and the price of the article produced? Unquestionably in many cases it is; but by means which the working man does not

contemplate, and at a sacrifice he is little prepared to meet. The aim might be attained, nearly but not quite, if the workmen would be content to receive only *eight hours' wages for eight hours' work*—that is, to be paid at the same rate as now for the amount produced. We say "nearly, but not quite;"—and the reason of the guarded phrase will be clear from a few moments' consideration. The cost of production of any article consists of two elements—the wages of labour and what are technically called "contingent expenses"—*i.e.*, the interest of the capital invested, both fixed and floating, the wear and tear or depreciation of the "plant" or machinery and buildings, and the outlay on sundry articles used in the process, such as coal, oil, leather, &c., whose consumption does not bear a strict proportion to the hours of work. Now, these "contingent expenses"—this second main element in the cost of production—are the same, or nearly the same, whatever be the hours of work; they are almost as great for eight hours as for twelve, and must be reckoned rather by the year than by the day. The proportion which these bear to mere wages in the calculation of the cost of the article produced, varies of course enormously according to the nature of the trade; but probably it is a fair average to reckon that labour constitutes *two-thirds*, and "contingencies" (interest, &c.) *one-third* of the total. Now, the shorter the hours worked, and consequently the smaller the quantity of goods produced, the heavier will these fixed expenses—this unvarying and inescapable one-third—

weigh upon each pound, or yard, or hundredweight of those goods. It is obvious, therefore, that the workman, who determines to work only eight hours, and so limits himself to only eight hours' production, must, in order to prevent the total cost of production being enhanced thereby, content himself not with eight hours' wages in lieu of ten or twelve, *but with something like seven hours.* This is the condition on which alone he can solve the problem of limiting the hours of labour without mischievously and onerously, and perhaps ruinously enhancing prices, restricting sales, and sapping the prosperity of the particular industry by which he lives. On no easier terms can he obtain his cherished object; for the laws of economic science, being neither more nor less than the laws of Nature, are stern and unrelenting, and no theorising or enthusiasm can shake off their grasp.

Well, then, is the boon of a labour-day of eight hours worth securing at this price? To many it may be; let such purchase it with their eyes open. Again, —could the operatives live in comfort and adequate plenty on the earnings of the day's labour thus reduced? In many trades, and in some years, unquestionably "yes," provided they had learned, and were content, to live frugally, soberly, and skilfully; provided, that is, they knew how to make their money go as far as money might do. For, as we hope to show before we have finished, something like twenty per cent. of the operatives' earnings might, as a rule, be saved or spared; and because of late years wages have risen in

most branches of industry out of all proportion to the cost of articles of consumption,—some of which, indeed, have on an average fallen in price. We purposely avoid burdening our argument with statistical details, but, on the whole, we are distinctly within the mark in stating that between 1851 and 1871 the general advance of artisan and manufacturing wages has exceeded twenty per cent.; while in perhaps our largest industry (the cotton trade) it ranges between forty and fifty per cent. Moreover, we have returns lying before us from a locality where business has been by no means exceptionally prosperous, nor wages exceptionally high, nor living exceptionally cheap, but rather the reverse of all this; and these returns show that the average of earnings of all families (including nearly 300 persons) reach £103 a-year; and, as nearly as can be ascertained, their average family expenditure (drink of course excluded) is £71.

The irrefragable conclusion from all this is that the limitation of the labour-day to eight hours, if really desired by the working-classes, and desirable for them, must be *purchased by them*, not *bestowed upon them*; that it *can* be purchased, and *cannot* be bestowed; that, in a word, it is idle in them, and either ignorant or insincere in their leaders, to seek from Parliament, or from any conceivable legislation, or from any external operation whatever

> 'A gift of that which is not to be *given*
> By all the blended powers of earth and heaven.'*

* Some objectors may be disposed to urge that we have omitted to notice two other ways in which the limitation of the labour-day

We now come to the 6th resolution—the crudest and most startling of the whole;—'Public markets shall be erected and maintained in every town for the sale of goods of the best quality at wholesale prices.' If in every town, then, as a matter of equity, of course in every village, and wherever men do congregate. If at wholesale prices, why not at cost price. Surely the manufacturer or the wholesale dealer is not more sacred or legitimate *per se* than that of the retailer. The very form and character of the demand is an excellent specimen of the perverse ingenuity with which the spokesmen of the labouring classes so constantly contrive to caricature their reasonable claims, to provoke opposition and repel sympathy by the shallowest

may be effected without any (corresponding) enhancement of the cost of production,—namely, by the masters foregoing an adequate proportion of their (supposed) exorbitant profits,—or by increasing the productive powers of their machinery by improved processes. In answer to the last suggestion, it is enough to say that this course of improvement is perpetually going on, quite independent of the 'hours' question; and that though it cheapens the cost of production *positively*, it does not *relatively*, and therefore can in no degree protect us against fatal injury to our industry from the competition of foreign nations which work longer hours than we do, and adopt all new inventions as soon as we do. With regard to the first objection, we reply that (taking those who lose as well as those who gain) the profits of capitalists are by no means exorbitant; that capital, if debarred from its legitimate profits, would soon cease to accumulate or to produce, or would remove into other trades and other countries; and, finally, that even if the entire average profits of the employers were to be surrendered, it is very doubtful whether they would compensate (in keeping down the cost of production) for the diminution of productive power by the adoption of an eight hours' labour-day. In most cases they certainly would not.

extravagance, and to clamour for the impossible while neglecting and despising the attainable. The defective and unsound state of the retail trade of the kingdom, owing mainly to the redundant numbers who attempt to live by it, is, as we are about to argue, one of the most serious misfortunes and grievances of the poor. It demands prompt and earnest attention, and we believe admits of great mitigation if not of complete rectification. But the claim of the Resolutionists is neither more nor less than this :—that the State shall take into its own hands the entire management of the largest and most wide-spread trade of the country, and should transact the business for nothing,—*i.e.*, through the instrumentality of official shopkeepers, who shall be paid out of the produce of the general taxation. Let us reflect for a moment what this claim involves—we may be pretty sure that the promulgators of it did not so reflect. It implies that the Government shall become retail tradesmen. It implies sweeping away at one stroke the occupation and the livelihood of probably not less than a million of distributors, and reducing them to destitution, or sending them to seek support elsewhere. It implies the creation and State supervision of a vast army of paid officials, who will have no personal interest in the work of distribution, and must therefore be expected to discharge it in that perfunctory fashion which is the besetting danger of the Civil Service. It implies, further, a gain which is in a great measure deceptive and disguised ; for, judging by the usual experience of State action

(which has never the repute of economy), the aggregate cost of distribution under the new system is scarcely likely to be less than it is at present, only it would be paid out of the Consolidated Fund. But this would only be in the first instance: for (though our Resolutionists find it convenient to forget or to ignore the fact) the same Consolidated Fund is provided by taxation, and that taxation is levied chiefly by indirect means and by duties on articles of consumption, *which would require to be advanced* in order to meet the four or five millions needed to pay the cost of gratuitous retail distribution. That is to say, the consumer, instead of paying 6*d.* per pound on his tea, or 2*d.* a pound on his sugar, or 1*d.* on his ale, to the shopkeeper as hitherto, would have that sum levied *in limine* at the Custom House, or by the Inland Revenue Department. Finally,—and this possibly was in the minds of the framers of the strange demand, though they are prudently silent on the subject—the arrangement would be likely to effect an insidious shifting of the public burdens from one class to another—would change the incidence of taxation without appearing to do so; for two-thirds of the saving effected by this suppression of retail profits would go into the pockets of the wage-classes (who are the principal consumers of most articles) while two-thirds of the expense of this system of gratuitous distribution would be paid by the propertied classes (who are the largest tax-payers). In short, if the cost of gratuitous distribution were laid upon the article sold, as it in fairness ought to be, there

would be no gain, or a very slight one, and the change is uncalled for. If it were charged to the national expenditure in general, the middle and upper ranks would simply be mulcted in order to lower prices for the poor; the employers of labour would be forced indirectly to give their labourers a portion of the price of their food in addition to paying them their stipulated wages. It is well thus to analyse these seemingly beneficial and plausible demands, and see how they look in the nakedness of honest English words.

Nevertheless it is certain that the unsound state of the retail trade is one of the greatest evils of which the workmen have to complain, and its rectification one of the truest scents to which their attention can be directed. The poor are deplorably victimised by the shopkeepers; yet the shopkeepers, as a class, do not realise exorbitant or even adequate gains. The simple explanation of the apparent contradiction is that they are far *too thick upon the ground.** In many villages, and in the worst quarters of large towns, in London and the manufacturing districts more especially, the number of each man's customers is too restricted to make a comfortable livelihood compatible with a moderate rate of profits and strictly fair dealing. If a

* Returns of occupations were given far too loosely in the Census for us to pretend to state actual numbers with any accuracy. But in 'Dodd's Food of London,' p. 504, there is an attempt to estimate the number of persons employed in retailing food alone (of all sorts, eatable and drinkable) to the inhabitants of the metropolis. They are reckoned at 100,000, including 24,000 master tradesmen.

tradesman has 500 customers, and turns over £5000 a year, he can afford to be content with 10 per cent. profit on his goods. If he has only 50 customers, and turns over only £500 a year, he can scarcely live upon less than 20 or 25 per cent. Any man can set up a shop who pleases, and the race of competition for employment is so keen, that many more persons set up shops than are needed, or can live by doing so. It is a great mistake to fancy—as a few years ago we fancied (also erroneously) in the case of railways—that competition always or necessarily lowers prices. It often has practically just the opposite effect. It certainly has in many of the quarters and towns inhabited by the artisan class, where we have been able to push close inquiries. We believe we are not overstating the case when we say that probably two-thirds of the existing small shopkeepers *cannot* make a decent livelihood without either an extravagant rate of profits, practising adulteration, or using short weights and measures—or all three.* One reason for this is,

* The extent to which adulteration—sometimes innocuous, sometimes pernicious in the extreme—is carried on, with the object of illicitly increasing the profits of retail dealers, we have no means of ascertaining. In the case of tea and beer it is known to be practised to a scandalous extent among the lower class of shopkeepers, and the law offers no efficient means of detecting or punishing the practice. It is earnestly to be hoped that this subject may engage the attention of Government at an early period. No law, however, will ever be effectual without public prosecutors, whose *duty* it is to enforce it by unremitting vigilance. Some information on the subject may be gathered from the Reports of Dr Hassall and Dr Letheby; but it is vague and inadequate. The

as we said, their too scanty *clientèle.* Another is their frequent and often heavy bad debts. Any contrivance (or regulation, if that were possible) that should reduce the number of retailers by 50 per cent. or 70 per cent., would be probably the greatest practical and immediate boon to the working classes that could be devised. Any squire of a populous village or parish, any great employer of labour in isolated districts, who would establish and maintain one comprehensive store, and enable it to beat out or eat up all rivals, on condition of its adopting honest prices, sound quality, full measure, and no credit, would be rendering a service to the neighbourhood which scarcely any other boon could equal.

We have taken a good deal of trouble to collect reliable information from different parts of the country on the subject of the difference between wholesale and retail prices, but it is not easy to arrive at any general results. The following may, however, be taken as a summary:—Where articles are contracted for in vast quantities, as in the case of soldiers' clothing and boots, or the supply of meat and bread for prisons or workhouses, the difference between the price paid to the producer and that at which similar goods are sold to the small consumer by the small shopkeeper is enormous—often 50 per cent. But this is scarcely a fair mode of comparison. Again, when the articles, as is often the

convictions of retail tradesmen for the use of false weights and measures were as follows:—(1868) 6595; (1869) 6139: (1870) 5757.

case, pass through two or three hands before reaching the actual purchaser and wearer, two or three profits or commissions have to be paid, and the cost is proportionately enhanced. But on the whole, in the case of large retailers who carry on business on an adequate scale, and among a safe and respectable class of customers, the rate of profit is by no means extravagant—with the exception of tailors and shoemakers. What the former charge it is hard to say; the latter we believe gain often 50 per cent. at least. The difference between calicoes and shirtings, as they leave the manufacturer and as they reach the consumer over the counter, and per yard, ranges from 12 to 15 per cent. and upwards. The retail profit on bread—*i.e.*, the difference between the price of flour, *plus* the cost of baking, and the price of the 4-lb. loaf, appears to be from 16 to 25 per cent., supposing there to be no credit and no adulteration. Retail grocers nearly all agree in asserting that they make no profit at all on sugar, but often lose by it, and we incline to believe their statement. To balance this bare or unprofitable branch of trade, they usually put on 25 per cent. to the wholesale cost of their tea; but probably on an average their net gains do not much exceed 12 per cent. The profits on butchers' meat vary greatly, and we can arrive at no satisfactory data. The retail profit on malt liquor is, however, indisputably excessive. Between the brewer and the drinker, bitter beer, we believe, increases in cost 100 to 125 per cent. Porter, being *let down*,

even when not adulterated, 50 to 75 per cent. "Fourpenny ale," from 33 to 50 per cent.

The regular prices of the larger retail dealers, however, afford no criterion whatever of those charged by the smaller shopkeepers, who chiefly supply the handicraft and manufacturing classes, especially where (as is too commonly the case) their customers, by getting into their debt, are helpless in their hands, cannot leave them and complain in vain either with regard to quality or cost. It is, of course, impossible to ascertain with accuracy the extent of the tax thus virtually levied on the weekly earnings of the poor; but in reckoning it at 10 per cent. as a minimum, we have one irrefragable piece of evidence to justify us. We mean that the poor in most cases pay on an average 10 per cent. more for the articles they consume than, under a sounder system of distribution, they would need to pay—quality and measure considered. The accounts of the Co-operative Stores,* which are now

* 'The idea of establishing co-operative associations for the sale of articles of food at reasonable rates to the poorer classes was canvassed at the beginning of the present century, and there is a curious letter in the "University Magazine" for August, 1809, in which the writer points out the very great difficulty, then, as now, experienced by the agricultural labourer in procuring, "with tolerable advantage, even the humble necessaries to which his earnings are equivalent." In many instances, he says, a town is several miles' distance from the secluded village in which the labourer lives. As frequent journeys to this town are impracticable, very small shops are consequently opened in the scattered hamlet, and thither the scanty stipend of the peasant family uniformly goes:—

'"As these shops are supplied with the various articles in which they deal from no better a source than the largest retailer of the

pretty numerous throughout the country, afford us the data for this conclusion. Last year, on the motion of Mr Morrison, a return (imperfect but still extensive) relating to 749 Industrial and Co-operative Societies

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neighbouring county town, and as nothing bordering on competition can be supposed to exist in the seclusion of a confined village, it naturally occurs that the peasant pays nearly fifty per cent. more for his homely commodities than the mechanic, who possesses the advantage of purchasing of more extensive dealers at a market rendered advantageous by a spirit of rivalry. The countryman's ten shillings a week, therefore, undergo a most afflictive reduction in point of absolute value: an evil that requires little illustration, and which falls with particular severity on the man whose nominal remuneration for labour has not kept pace with the actual decrease evident in the value of money. In consequence of this local deterioration of the labourer's income, he gradually incurs a debt which binds him more firmly to the necessity of expending his earnings with the village trader, and compels him to purchase without a murmur indifferent articles at a price still more exorbitant than before."

'To remedy these evils, the writer suggests that "a shop be opened by the parish officers of every country neighbourhood, at which the poor might be served with unadulterated articles at a profit just sufficient to defray the expenses of the undertaking. The comparatively extensive capital, arising from the rates of a parish at large, would enable the proprietors to purchase goods at a desirable market. The charge of the establishment would be trivial. Some minor officer of the parish would be willing and able for a small salary to superintend the sale of articles in so limited and unembarrassed a concern; and the whole might be periodically inspected with little additional trouble by the churchwarden or overseer. Even admitting that the profits of the institution might not altogether defray the expenses, the parish would," the writer maintains, "certainly be gainers in the aggregate, for the debt of the pauper generally becomes an indirect burthen on the payers to the poor-rate, under the present order of things." The writer did not take into account what objections and difficulties lay in the way of his scheme.'—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

was laid before Parliament, from which it appeared that the average dividend these paid, after all expenses were deducted—*i.e.* (usually) the yearly sum returned to customers in proportion to their custom, was £555,435, out of a total of goods sold to the amount of £8,202,466, or 6¾ per cent. But, as this return appears to have included some industrial co-operative undertakings in addition to mere shops, and as the value of the document for our purposes might be thereby to some extent vitiated, we have been at the trouble of procuring exact accounts from four of the best managed Co-operative Stores in Lancashire and Cheshire, which have been at work for many years. The prices at which the articles are sold are generally the same that prevail among the retail shops in the neighbourhood—the quality is genuine and unexceptionable, and the measure given, of course, full and fair—good salaries are paid to shopmen and superintendent, and rents and taxes, as well as all other contingent expenses (interest on shareholders' capital included) are fairly calculated; but the sum returned at the year's end to the customers, in proportion to the amount of their custom, is in one case 5 per cent., in another 7½ per cent., but in the two largest stores it averages rather over 10 per cent.* Notice especially that this result is arrived at after all the cost of distri-

* The accounts of the Civil Service Supply Association (a co-operative store for the middle classes) show a somewhat different result. In this case the gross profits on the sales reached very nearly ten per cent., but as the working expenses, rent, &c., are unusually high, the net dividend does not much exceed 2½ per cent.

buting (in salaries, rent of shop, carriage of goods, supervision, &c.) has been paid; and that this cost represents the necessary—the *minimum* we allow, but still the necessary and adequate—profits of the retailer;* for the distributors in both cases live out of the expenses of management.

Now, let us realise to ourselves what this means. It means simply this: that under a sound system of retail trading—(for there is no reason to believe that these shops are more skilfully or economically conducted than establishments guided by private interest would be: the reverse is almost certainly the case)—the poor might supply all their household wants for one-tenth less than they pay at present, fair weights and measures and reliable quality taken into consideration;—that is, *might virtually add* 10 *per cent. to their earnings,* or actually save 10 per cent. out of them, without asking their employers for a shilling more than they receive at present.†

There yet remains for notice another means by

* The total cost of distribution in these co-operative stores averages about 5¼ per cent. on the amount turned over.

† The better class of operatives are well aware of the immense benefits they gain from well-managed stores of this sort; and they would spread far more rapidly and widely but for two obstacles:—*first,* the too general *indebtedness* of the labouring classes, which renders them almost helpless in the hands of the shopkeepers with whom they deal and who have given them credit; and *secondly,* the difficulty they experience in finding capable and strictly honest men of their own class to conduct their co-operative stores, and (we are sorry to say) of trusting them cordially even when they have found them.

which a further large per centage—whether 5 or 10 per cent. we will not pretend to say—might be gained by the working classes. Such frugality, management, and culinary skill as most French housewives of the poorer class usually possess and habitually practise—nay, even such as we find in isolated cases among the more notable in England and Scotland—would, it is notorious, enable families to live better and feed far more comfortably and nutritiously than they now do at a much lower cost. The waste that goes on at the tables of the artisan population, arising partly from carelessness, but still more from ignorance, inefficiency, and unthrift, is deplorable. Not unfrequently actual and reckless extravagance is added. Those who have the best opportunities of knowing assure us that no class of consumers are so wasteful as the London skilled artisan; and his brethren in Birmingham and elsewhere are not far behind him. The care that squanders nothing, the science and vigilance that make the most of all materials, which we find among French and Swiss peasant families, are here almost unknown. Large employers of labour tell us that if they were allowed to feed their workpeople they could economise very largely on their present household expenditure,* and yet improve upon their actual meals in every particular. We are acquainted with one considerable manu-

* Sir Titus Salt's vast manufacturing establishment near Bradford is a case in point. There very adequate breakfasts and dinners are provided for the work-people in a comfortable hall at a cost of 1d. to 2d. for breakfast, and 2d. or 3d. for dinner. And the concern is self-supporting at these prices.

facturing establishment where, for a long course of years, the proprietor *maintained*—fed, clothed, housed, and superintended — from 70 to 100 apprentices, growing children from thirteen to eighteen years of age, for 5s. a head per week; and nothing could be more nutritious or appetising than the food supplied. Examples on a far larger scale have shown what may be done in this direction. In Paris Madame Robert many years ago set on foot an establishment for supplying working men with good dinners for 2d. a head. which allowed her ¼d. or 12½ per cent. profit.* Mr Corbett's admirable cooking depôts in Glasgow have been singularly successful. They supply the best of breakfasts for 3d.—and dinners which may even be called sumptuous for 4½d., and smaller meals at 1d.—and yet are self-supporting.† These dining halls are comfortable in the extreme, and much frequented. Ten years ago there were 13 of them in Glasgow, furnishing 400,000 penny rations per month, and attended by 140,000 customers within the same period. There are now 27 branches attended by 10,000 daily. Similar establishments have been started in London, Manchester, and elsewhere, and with similar results. Very substantial dinners are advertised as supplied to working men by Mr Clark and Mr Tallerman, in Lambeth and Norton Folgate, at 2d. a head.‡ Nor

* Dr Letheby's "Lectures on Food," p. 197.

† See "Chambers' Social Tracts," Cheap Cooking Depôts.

‡ See "Report by the Council of the Society for Organising Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity"—a pamphlet which is full of valuable information and suggestions.

is this combination of economy with good feeding, the consequence chiefly of the wholesale character of the proceeding. Mr Corbett "has satisfied himself, by the most thorough investigation, that any really thrifty, managing housewife, can provide her husband and family with meals quite as good, and at even less money. The cooking at the depôts is quite plain and simple, and is attended to by persons no more experienced than a tradesman's wife in the higher and more difficult departments of the culinary art." Of course the housewife must waste nothing, must turn everything to account, must have something like a decent fireplace, *must know how to market as well as to cook*, must not neglect fish, as is so commonly done, and must not turn up her nose at Australian preserved meat, obtainable *net* at 6d. per lb., and prefer English beef and mutton, which, when stripped of bone and other innutritious parts, is calculated to cost *net* nearly 1s. 7d.

Let us now conclude this paper with a concise summary of the principal conclusions. It appears, from the calculations of Mr Baxter, Mr Leone Levi,* and myself, that the aggregate income of the working classes in this country may be taken at about £300,000,000. Mr Smiles (as shown in an earlier portion of this article) estimates, on pretty sure data, that the expenditure of those classes in drink and tobacco cannot be less than £60,000,000, of which

* "Political Problems," p. 309. Baxter, "Taxation of United Kingdom," p. 142.

two-thirds, or £40,000,000, must be deemed to be *excessive*,—that is extravagant and noxious. But, in order to be indisputably within the mark, let us assume it to be only *thirty* millions. It thus appears that the working classes spend *ten per cent.* of their earnings in needless and mischievous outlay in these articles alone. We have shown, further, that another ten per cent. is lost to them by the unsound condition of the retail system which supplies their weekly consumption. It appears, moreover, that a proportion of their means—certainly not less than five per cent., and probably much nearer ten—is wasted by mere unthrift, that is, by unskilful or careless marketing, house-keeping, and cooking. Finally, in the case of a large section of them, another voluntary and most unprofitable mulct is levied upon them in the shape of contributions to Trades Unions and strikes (a tax secretly resented, as we well know, by thousands who yet find themselves practically *forced* to pay it). The total result, then, is this, and it would seem impossible to question its accuracy,—that, at least as regards the manufacturing and artisan class—the skilled and half-skilled labourers of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, Northumberland, Durham, South Wales and the metropolis—the very classes, be it observed, by whom or on whose behalf Republicanism, Trades Unionism, revolutionary schemes, wild political or social theories of all sorts are talked—they might easily, beneficially, by the directest means and in conformity to the soundest rules, reduce their expenditure, *and so virtually in-*

crease their wages by THIRTY PER CENT.* And they might do this of their own mere motion by a simple act of intelligent, resolute, persistent volition, without upsetting society, without demanding an additional shilling from their employers, without asking any aid from the Legislature, without traversing one principle of the most rigid political economy, without any political action whatever. And if they would only do this, every social problem that now harasses them and gravels the statesman and philanthropist alike would, *ipso facto*, be solved, or be placed in the way of speedy and certain solution. And if the Legislative and Administrative authorities respectively did their part likewise, simply in the way of facilitation and encouragement, ere a generation passed away the artisan classes would be sober, they would be educated, they would be well housed, they would be happy; and, to sum up all, they would be capitalists, and might determine the great controversy between capital and labour (which now menaces social peace and order) in their own way; or, more probably, might discover that it had melted away in the healthier conditions of a satisfied and prosperous community.

But because they can do all these things for themselves, there is no reason why Legislative and Administrative aid should not be afforded them with all possible promptitude and zeal, wherever a legitimate opening for such aid can be pointed out. We have

* Messrs Chambers, in their tract on "Mis-expenditure," estimate these details at a still higher figure.

already intimated two or three of the modes in which they can be materially helped in their efforts to bring about better days. A wise and equitable regulation of the liquor trade is one of these, and this surely cannot much longer be refused to vast masses of men painfully conscious of their weakness and their dangers, and whose prayer, after all, is only that touching one, long ages ago hallowed by the most sacred of authorities—"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The granting of liberal facilities for providing decent and comfortable dwellings for the poor, and for the sanification of existing ones, is another mode. Such a firm and just execution of the law as will effectually protect both masters and workmen from the tyranny and violence of trades unions is a third. And, finally, such an education beyond mere elementary teaching as shall spread a competent acquaintance with the simplest principles of political and domestic economy, and really enable the artisan classes, to help themselves and to protect themselves, would amply repay, both to them and to society, all the trouble and outlay that could be spent upon it. To such matters as these the most earnest attention of Parliament and of Government ought to be directed without delay and without interruption. No mere political or party question should be suffered to divert us from this urgent work. The Ballot, Irish Education, Church Disestablishment, may be topics well worth discussing in their turn; but they do not press and they do not directly affect the well-being of the masses in com-

parison. For the next three or four sessions, at least, social questions must take precedence of all others. No doubt, such a programme of proceedings will render the Parliamentary arena somewhat dull to militant politicians: to unregenerate humanity fighting is naturally far more interesting and exciting than working. But the labouring classes have a right to demand that the questions which most vitally and immediately concern them shall, at length, engross the attention of those assemblies which assume to represent them, and which assuredly do rule their destiny. Nay, more: this right it lies in their power to enforce as well as to assert; for we are too apt to forget amid the strife of faction, and we may yet be rudely reminded, that into the hands of these classes a deplorable combination of party ambition, party rivalry, party recklessness, has given over the potential, if not yet the actual, command of the electoral body. At present they only insist that their affairs shall be attended to. Before long, they may insist that their schemes and crotchets shall be carried out. Much ridicule has been cast, and not without justice, upon the late pompous announcement of a "New Social Alliance" between the aristocracy and the working classes. But this much we may take to be undeniable —that whichever political party shall first grapple, in a courageous and generous spirit, with those great topics which, beyond all others, stir the hearts and come home to the daily life of the proletariat, and shall show a determination to deal with them in the

interest of the country at large, and especially of the more helpless part of the community, will reap a well-merited popularity which, if it does not confer office, will at least be power. Only the task must be undertaken in all singleness of mind, without *arrière pensée*, and with no party aim.

1872.

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